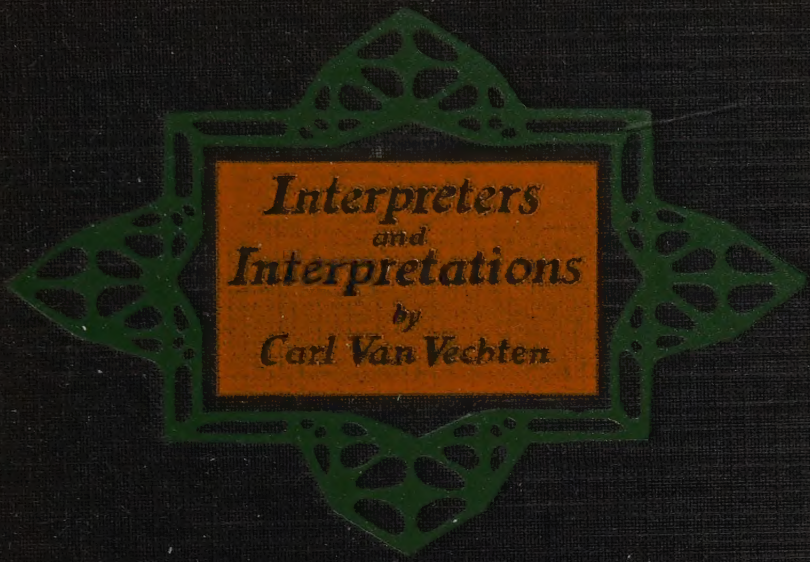

Interpreters
and
Interpretations
by
Carl Van Vechten

Interpreters and Interpretations



By THE SAME AUTHOR

MUSIC AND BAD MANNERS
MUSIC AFTER THE GREAT WAR

Interpreters and Interpretations

Carl Van Vechten



New York Alfred A. Knopf
MCMXVII

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ALFRED A. KNOPF

Published October, 1917

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

the unforgetable interpreter of

Ariel . . Zelima . . . Louka . . . . Wenala . . . . .

My Wife

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Several of these essays have appeared in current periodicals and thanks are due to the editors of "The Bellman," "The Musical Quarterly," "The Seven Arts," and "Vanity Fair" for permission to republish them. However all of these have been considerably altered and expanded.

Olive Fremstad

C'est que le Beau est la seule chose qui soit immortelle, et qu'aussi longtemps qu'il reste un vestige de sa manifestation matérielle, son immortalité subsiste. Le Beau est répandu partout, il s'étend même jusque sur la mort. Mais il ne rayonne nulle part avec autant d'intensité que dans l'individualité humaine; c'est là qu'il parle le plus à l'intelligence, et c'est pour cela que, pour ma part, je préférerai toujours une grande puissance musicale servie par une voix défectueuse, à une voix belle et bête, une voix dont la beauté n'est que matérielle."

Ivan Turgeniev to Mme. Viardot.

Olive Fremstad

THE career of Olive Fremstad has entailed continuous struggle: a struggle in the beginning with poverty, a struggle with a refractory voice, and a struggle with her own overpowering and dominating temperament. Ambition has steered her course. After she had made a notable name for herself through her interpretations of contralto rôles, she determined to sing soprano parts, and did so, largely by an effort of will. She is always dissatisfied with her characterizations; she is always studying ways and means of improving them. It is not easy for her to mould a figure; it is, on the contrary, very difficult. One would suppose that her magnetism and force would carry her through an opera without any great amount of preparation. Such is not the case. There is no other singer before the public so little at her ease in any impromptu performance. Recently, when she returned to the New York stage with an itinerant opera company to sing in an ill-rehearsed performance of *Tosca*, she all but lost her grip. She was not herself and she did not convince. New costumes, which hindered her movements, and a Scarpia with whom she was unfamiliar, were responsible in a measure

for her failure to assume her customary authority.

If you have seen and heard Olive Fremstad in the scene of the spear in *Götterdämmerung*, you will find it difficult to believe that what I say is true, that work and not plenary inspiration is responsible for the effect. To be sure, the inspiration has its place in the final result. Once she is certain of her ground, words, music, tone-colour, gesture, and action, she inflames the whole magnificently with her magnetism. This magnetism is instinctive, a part of herself; the rest is not. She brings about the detail with diligent drudgery, and without that her performances would go for nought. The singer pays for this intense concentration. In "Tower of Ivory" Mrs. Atherton says that all Wagnerian singers must pay heavily. Probably all good ones must. Charles Henry Melzer has related somewhere that he first saw Mme. Fremstad on the stage at Covent Garden, where between her scenes in some Wagner music drama, lost in her rôle, utterly oblivious of stage hands or fellow-artists, she paced up and down in the wings. At the moment he decided that she was a great interpretative artist, and he had never heard her sing. When she is singing a rôle she will not allow herself to be interrupted; she holds no receptions between scenes.

"Come back after the opera," she says to her friends, and frequently then she is too tired to see any one. She often drives home alone, a prey to quivering nerves which keep her eyeballs rolling in ceaseless torture — sleepless.

Nothing about the preparation of an opera is easy for Olive Fremstad; the thought, the idea, does not register immediately in her brain. But once she has achieved complete understanding of a rôle and thoroughly mastered its music, the fire of her personality enables her easily to set a standard. Is there another singer who can stand on the same heights with Mme. Fremstad as Isolde, Venus, Elsa, Sieglinde, Kundry, Armide, Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*, or Salome? And are not these the most difficult and trying rôles in the répertoire of the lyric stage to-day?

In one of her impatient moods — and they occur frequently — the singer once complained of this fact. "How easy it is," she said, "for those who make their successes as Marguerite and Mimi. . . . I should like to sing those rôles. . . ." But the remark was made under a misconception of her own personality. Mme. Fremstad would find Mimi and Marguerite much more difficult to compass than Isolde and Kundry. She is by nature Northern and heroic, and her physique is suited

to the goddesses and heroines of the Norse myths (it is a significant fact that she has never attempted to sing Eva or Senta). Occasionally, as in Salome, she has been able to exploit successfully another side of her talent, but in the rendering of the grand, the noble, and the heroic, she has no equal on our stage. Yet her Tosca always lacked nobility. There was something in the music which never brought the quality out.

In such a part as Selika she seemed lost (wasted, too, it may be added), although the entrance of the proud African girl was made with some effect, and the death scene was carried through with beauty of purpose. But has any one ever characterized Selika? Her Santuzza, one of the two rôles which she has sung in Paris, must be considered a failure when judged by the side of such a performance as that given by Emma Calvé — and who would judge Olive Fremstad by any but the highest standards? The Swedish singer's Santuzza was as elemental, in its way, as that of the Frenchwoman, but its implications were too tragic, too massive in their noble beauty, for the correct interpretation of a sordid melodrama. It was as though some one had engaged the Victory of Samothrace to enact the part. Munich adored the Fremstad Carmen (was it not

her characterization of the Bizet heroine which caused Heinrich Conried to engage her for America?) and Franz von Stuck painted her twice in the rôle. Even in New York she was appreciated in the part. The critics awarded her fervent adulation, but she never stirred the public pulse. The principal fault of this very Northern Carmen was her lack of humour, a quality the singer herself is deficient in. For a season or two in America Mme. Fremstad appeared in the rôle, singing it, indeed, in San Francisco the night of the memorable earthquake, and then it disappeared from her répertoire. Maria Gay was the next Metropolitan Carmen, but it was Geraldine Farrar who made the opera again as popular as it had been in Emma Calvé's day.

Mme. Fremstad is one of those rare singers on the lyric stage who is able to suggest the meaning of the dramatic situation through the colour of her voice. This tone-colour she achieves stroke by stroke, devoting many days to the study of important phrases. To go over in detail the instances in which she has developed effects through the use of tone-colour would make it necessary to review, note by note, the operas in which she has appeared. I have no such intention. It may be sufficient to recall to the reader — who,

in remembering, may recapture the thrill — the effect she produces with the poignant lines beginning *Amour, puissant amour* at the close of the third act of *Armide*, the dull, spent quality of the voice emitted over the words *Ich habe deinen Mund geküsst* from the final scene of *Salome*, and the subtle, dreamy rapture of the *Liebestod* in *Tristan und Isolde*. Has any one else achieved this effect? She once told me that Titian's Assumption of the Virgin was her inspiration for her conception of this scene.

Luscious in quality, Mme. Fremstad's voice is not altogether a tractable organ, but she has forced it to do her bidding. A critic long ago pointed out that another singer would not be likely to emerge with credit through the use of Mme. Fremstad's vocal method. It is full of expediences. Oftener than most singers, too, she has been in "bad voice." And her difficulties have been increased by her determination to become a soprano, difficulties she has surmounted brilliantly. In other periods we learn that singers did not limit their ranges by the quality of their voices. In our day singers have specialized in high or low rôles. Many contraltos, however, have chafed under the restrictions which composers have compelled them to accept. Almost

all of them have attempted now and again to sing soprano rôles. Only in the case of Edyth Walker, however, do we find an analogy to the case of Olive Fremstad. Both of these singers have attained high artistic ideals in both ranges. Magnificent as Brangaene, Amneris, and Ortrud, the Swedish singer later presented unrivalled characterizations of Isolde, Armide, and Brünnhilde.

The high tessitura of the music allotted to the *Siegfried* Brünnhilde is a strain for most singers. Mme. Nordica once declared that this Brünnhilde was the most difficult of the three. Without having sung a note in the early evening, she must awake in the third act, about ten-thirty or eleven, to begin almost immediately the melismatic duet which concludes the music drama. Mme. Fremstad, by the use of many expediences, such as pronouncing Siegfried as if it were spelled Seigfried when the first syllable fell on a high note, was able to get through with this part without projecting a sense of effort, unless it was on the high C at the conclusion, a note of which she frequently allowed the tenor to remain in undisputed possession. But the fierce joy and spirited abandon she put into the acting of the rôle, the passion with which she infused her singing, carried her victoriously past the dangerous places, often more

victoriously than some other singer, who could produce high notes more easily, but whose stage resources were more limited.

I do not think Mme. Fremstad has trained her voice to any high degree of flexibility. She can sing the drinking song from *Lucrezia Borgia* and Delibes's *Les Filles de Cadiz* with irresistible effect, a good part of which, however, is produced by her personality and manner, qualities which carry her far on the concert stage, although for some esoteric reason they have never inveigled the general public into an enthusiastic surrender to her charm. I have often heard her sing Swedish songs in her native tongue (sometimes to her own accompaniment) so enchantingly, with such appeal in her manner, and such velvet tones in her voice, that those who heard her with me not only burst into applause but also into exclamations of surprise and delight. Nevertheless, in her concerts, or in opera, although her admirers are perhaps stronger in their loyalty than those of any other singer, she has never possessed the greatest drawing power. This is one of the secrets of the stage; it cannot be solved. It would seem that the art of Mme. Fremstad was more homely, more human in song, grander and more noble in opera, than that of Mme. Tetrazzini, but the public as a

whole prefers to hear the latter, just as it has gone in larger numbers to see the acting of Miss Garden or Mme. Farrar. Why this is so I cannot pretend to explain.

Mme. Fremstad has appeared in pretty nearly all of the important, and many of the lesser, Wagner rôles. She has never sung Senta, and she once told me that she had no desire to do so, nor has she been heard as Freia or Eva. But she has sung Ortrud and Elsa, Venus and Elizabeth, Adriano in *Rienzi*, Kundry, Isolde and Brangaene, Fricka, Erda, Waltraute, Sieglinde, one of the Rhine maidens (perhaps two), and all three Brünnhildes. In most of these characterizations she has succeeded in making a deep impression. I have never seen her Ortrud, but I have been informed that it was a truly remarkable impersonation. Her Elsa was the finest I have ever seen. To Ternina's poetic interpretation she added her own greater grace and charm, and a lovelier quality of voice. If, on occasion, the music of the second act proved too high for her, who could sing the music of the dream with such poetic expression? — or the love music in the last act? — as beautiful an impersonation, and of the same kind, as Mary Garden's Mélisande.

Her Venus was another story. She yearned

for years to sing Elizabeth, and when she had satisfied this ambition, she could be persuaded only with difficulty to appear as the goddess. She told me once that she would like to sing both rôles in a single evening — a possible feat, as the two characters never appear together; Rita Fornia, I believe, accomplished the dual impersonation on one occasion at the behest of Colonel Savage. She had in mind a heroine with a dual nature, sacred and profane love so to speak, and Tannhäuser at the mercy of this gemini-born wight. She never was permitted to try this experiment at the Metropolitan, but during her last season there she appeared as Elizabeth. Montreal, and perhaps Brooklyn, had seen this impersonation before it was vouchsafed New York. Mme. Fremstad never succeeded in being very convincing in this rôle. I do not exactly understand why, as its possibilities seem to lie within her limitations. Nor did she sing the music well. On the other hand, her abundantly beautiful and voluptuous Venus, a splendid, towering, blonde figure, shimmering in flesh-coloured garments, was one of her astoundingly accurate characterizations. At the opposite pole to her Sieglinde it was equally a masterpiece of interpretative art, like Duse's Camille "positively enthralling as an exhibition of

the gymnastics of perfect suppleness and grace." In both these instances she was inspired perhaps to realize something a little more wonderful than the composer himself had dreamed of. The depth and subtlety and refinement of intense passion were in this Venus — there was no suggestion here of what Sidney Homer once referred to as Mme. Homer's platonic Venus!

Her Sieglinde is firmly intrenched in many of our memories, the best loved of her Wagnerian women and enchantresses. Will there rise another singing actress in our generation to make us forget it? I do not think so. Her melting womanliness in the first act, ending with her complete surrender to Siegmund, her pathetic fatigue in the second act (do you not still see the harassed, shuddering figure stumbling into view and falling voiceless to sleep at the knees of her brother-lover?) remain in the memory like pictures in the great galleries. And how easily in the last act, in her single phrase, by her passionate suggestion of the realization of motherhood, did she wrest the scene from her fellow-artists, no matter who they might be, making such an effect before she fled into the forest depths, that what followed often seemed but anticlimax.

Mme. Fremstad never sang the three Brünn-

hildes in sequence at the Metropolitan Opera House (of late years no soprano has done so), but she was called upon at various times to sing them all separately. Undoubtedly it was as the Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* that she made the most lasting impression. The scene of the oath on the spear she carried into the realms of Greek tragedy. Did Rachel touch greater heights? Was the French Jewess more electric? The whole performance displayed magnificent proportions, attaining a superb stature in the immolation scene. In scenes of this nature, scenes hovering between life and death, the eloquent grandeur of Mme. Fremstad's style might be observed in its complete flowering. Isolde over the body of Tristan, Brünnhilde over the body of Tristan, exhibited no mincing pathos; the mood established was one of lofty calm. Great artists realize that this is the true expression of overwhelming emotion. In this connection it seems pertinent and interesting to recall a notable passage in a letter from Ivan Turgeniev to Pauline Viardot:—

"You speak to me also about *Romeo*, the third act; you have the goodness to ask me for some remarks on Romeo. What could I tell you that you have not already known and felt in ad-

vance? The more I reflect on the scene of the third act the more it seems to me that there is only one manner of interpreting it — yours. One can imagine nothing more horrible than finding oneself before the corpse of all that one loves; but the despair that seizes you then ought to be so terrible that, if it is not held and *frozen* by the resolution of suicide, or by another *grand* sentiment, art can no longer render it. Broken cries, sobs, fainting fits, these are nature, but they are not art. The spectator himself will not be moved by that poignant and profound emotion which you stir so easily. Whereas by the manner in which you wish to do Romeo (as I understand what you have written me) you will produce on your auditor an ineffaceable effect. I remember the fine and just observation that you once made on the agitated and restrained little gestures that Rachel made, at the same time maintaining an attitude of calm nobility; with her, perhaps, that was only technique; but in general it is the calm *arising from a strong conviction or from a profound emotion*, that is to say the calm which envelopes the desperate transports of passion from all sides, which communicates to them that purity of line, that ideal and real beauty, the true, the only beauty of art. And, what proves

the truth of this remark, is that life itself — on rare occasions, it is true, at those times when it disengages itself from all that is accidental or commonplace — raises itself to the same kind of beauty. The greatest griefs, as you have said in your letter, are the calmest; and, one could add, the calmest are the most beautiful. But it is necessary to know how to unite the two extremes, unless one would appear cold. It is easier not to attain perfection, easier to rest in the middle of one's journey, the more so because the greater number of spectators demand nothing else, or rather are not accustomed to anything else, but you are what you are only because of this noble ambition to do your best. . . ."

In the complex rôle of Kundry Mme. Fremstad has had no rival. The wild witch of the first act, the enchantress of the second, the repentant Magdalene of the third, all were imaginatively impersonated by this wonderful woman. Certain actors drop their characterizations as soon as the dialogue passes on to another; such as these fail in *Parsifal*, for Kundry, on the stage for the entire third act, has only one word to sing; in the first act she has but few more. Colossally alluring in the second act, in which she symbolized the essence of the "eternal feminine," Mme. Fremstad

projected the first and third act Kundry into the minds and hearts of her audience.

Well-trained in Bayreuth tradition, this singer was no believer in it; she saw no reason for clinging to outworn ideals simply because they prevailed at the Master's own theatre. However, she did not see how an individual could break with tradition in these works without destroying their effect. The break must come from the stage director.

"If Wagner were alive today," she once said to me, "I don't believe that he would sanction a lot of the silly 'business' that is insisted upon everywhere because it is the law at Bayreuth. Wagner was constantly changing everything. When he produced his music dramas they were so entirely new in conception and in staging that they demanded experimentation in many directions. Doubtless certain traditions were founded on the interpretations of certain singers — who probably could not have followed other lines of action, which Wagner might have preferred, so successfully.

"The two scenes which I have particularly in mind are those of the first act of *Tannhäuser* and the second act of *Parsifal*. Both of these scenes, it seems to me, should be arranged with the most

undreamed of beauty in colour and effect. Venus should not pose for a long time in a stiff attitude on an uncomfortable couch. I don't object to the couch, but it should be made more alluring.

"The same objection holds in the second act of *Parsifal*, where Kundry is required to fascinate Parsifal, although she is not given an opportunity of moving from one position for nearly twenty minutes. When Klingsor calls Kundry from below in the first scene of that act, she comes against her will, and I think she should arise gasping and shuddering. I try to give that effect in my voice when I sing the music, but, following Bayreuth, I am standing, motionless, with a veil over my head, so that my face cannot be seen for some time before I sing.

"One singer can do nothing against the mass of tradition. If I changed and the others did not, the effect would be inartistic. But if some stage manager would have the daring to break away, to strive for something better in these matters, how I would love to work with that man!"

Departing from the Wagnerian répertoire, Mme. Fremstad has made notable successes in two rôles, Salome and Armide. That she should be able to do justice to the latter is more astonishing than that she should emerge triumphant from

the Wilde-Strauss collaboration. *Armide*, almost the oldest opera to hold the stage today, is still the French classic model, and it demands in performance adherence to the French grand style, a style implying devotion to the highest artistic ideals. Mme. Fremstad's artistic ideals are perhaps on a higher plane than those of the Paris Conservatoire or the Comédie Française, but it does not follow that she would succeed in moulding them to fit a school of opera with which, to this point, she had been totally unfamiliar. So far as I know, the only other opera Mme. Fremstad had ever sung in French is *Carmen*, an experience which could not be considered as the training for a suitable delineation of the heroine of Gluck's beautiful lyric drama. Still Mme. Fremstad compassed the breach. How, I cannot pretend to say. No less an authority than Victor Maurel pronounced it a triumph of the French classic style.

The moods of Quinault's heroine, of course, suit this singing actress, and she brought to them all her most effectual enchantments, including a series of truly seducing costumes. The imperious unrest of the first act, the triumph of love over hate in the second, the invocation to La Haine in the third, and the final scene of despair in the fifth, all

were depicted with poignant and moving power, and always with fidelity to the style of the piece. She set her own pace in the finale of the first act. The wounded warrior returns to tell how a single combatant has delivered all his prisoners. Armide's half-spoken guess, *O ciel! c'est Renaud!* which she would like to have denied, was uttered in a tone which definitely stimulated the spectator to prepare for the conflict which followed, the conflict in Armide's own breast, between her love for Renaud as a man, and her hatred of him as an enemy. I do not remember to have seen anything on the stage more profound in its implied psychology than her acting of the scene beginning *Enfin il est en ma puissance*, in which she stays her hand with dagger uplifted to kill the enemy-hero, and finally completely conquered by the darts of Love, transports him with her through the air to her own fair gardens.

The singer told me that she went to work on this opera with fear in her heart. "I don't know how I dared do it. I suppose it is because I had the simplicity to believe, with the Germans, that Kundry is the top of everything, and I had sung Kundry. As a matter of fact my leaning toward the classic school dates very far back. My father was a strange man, of evangelical tendencies. He

wrote a hymn-book, which is still in use in Scandinavia, and he had a beautiful natural voice. People often came for miles — simple country people, understand — to hear him sing. My father knew the classic composers and he taught me their songs.

"This training came back to me when I took up the study of *Armide*. It was in May that Mr. Gatti-Casazza asked me if I would sing the work, which, till then, I had never heard. I took the book with me to the mountains and studied — not a note of the music at first, for music is very easy for me anyway; I can always learn that in a short time — but the text. For six weeks I read and re-read the text, always the difficult part for me in learning a new opera, without looking at the music. I found the text of *Armide* particularly difficult because it was in old French, and because it was in verse.

"I worked over it for six weeks, as I tell you, until I had mastered its beauties as well as I could, and then I opened the music score. Here I encountered a dreadful obstacle. Accustomed to Wagner's harmonies, I was puzzled by the French style. I did not see how the music could be sung to the text with dramatic effect. I attended several performances of the work at the Paris Opéra,

but the interpretation there did not assist me in solving the problem. I tried every phrase in fifty different ways in an attempt to arrive at my end, and suddenly, and unexpectedly, I found myself in complete understanding; the exquisite refinement and nobility of the music, the repression, the classic line, all suggested to me the superb, eternal beauty of a Greek temple. Surely this is music that will outlive Wagner!

"Once I understood, it was easy to put my conception on the stage. There is no such thing as genius in singing; at least one cannot depend on genius alone to carry one through an opera. I must know exactly how I am going to sing each phrase before I go upon the stage. Nothing must be left to chance. In studying *Armide* I had sketches sent to me of every scene, and with these I worked until I knew every movement I should make, where I should stand, and when I should walk. Look at my score — at all these minute diagrams and directions. . . ."

Armide was not a popular success in New York, and after one or two performances in its second season at the Metropolitan Opera House it was withdrawn. With the reasons for the failure of this opera to interest the general public Mme. Fremstad, it may well be imagined, had nothing to

do. Her part in it, on the contrary, contributed to what success the work had. New York operagoers have never manifested any particular regard for classic opera in any tongue; *Fidelio* or *Don Giovanni* have never been popular here. Then, although Caruso sang the music of Renaud with a style and beauty of phrasing unusual even for him, his appearance in the part was unfortunate. It was impossible to visualize the chevalier of the romantic story. The second tenor rôle, which is very important, was intrusted to an incompetent singer, and the charming rôle of the Naiad was very inadequately rendered; but the principal fault of the interpretation was due to a misconception regarding the relative importance of the ballet. There are dances in every act of *Armide;* there is no lovelier music of its kind extant than that which Gluck has devoted to his dancers in this opera. Appreciating this fact, Mr. Toscanini refused to part with a note of it, and his delivery of the delightful tunes would have made up a pleasant half-hour in a concert-room. Unfortunately the management did not supplement his efforts by providing a suitable group of dancers. This failure was all but incomprehensible considering the fact that Anna Pavlowa was a member of the Metropolitan company that sea-

son. Had she appeared in *Armide*, its fate in New York, where it was performed for the first time one hundred and thirty-three years after its original production in Paris, might have been far different. It may have been impossible for Mr. Gatti-Casazza to obtain the co-operation of the dancer. Times change. In 1833 Taglioni, then at the height of her powers, danced in London the comparatively insignificant parts of the Swiss peasant in *Guillaume Tell* and the ghostly abbess in *Robert le Diable*. This was the season in which she introduced *La Sylphide* to English theatre-goers.

The history of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in New York has been told so often that it seems quite unnecessary to repeat it here. There must be few indeed of those who will read these lines who do not know how the music drama received only one public performance at the Metropolitan Opera House before it was withdrawn at the request of certain directors. At that one performance Olive Fremstad sang the rôle of Salome. She was also heard at the private dress rehearsal — before an auditorium completely filled with invited guests — and she has sung the part three times in Paris. The singer threw herself into its preparation with her usual energy, and developed

an extraordinary characterization. There was but one flaw, the substitution of a professional dancer for the Dance of the Seven Veils. At this time it had occurred to nobody that the singer who impersonated Salome could dance. How could any one sing the music of the tremendous finale after getting thoroughly out of breath in the terpsichorean exhibition before Herod? The expedient of a substitute was resorted to at the original performance in Dresden, and Olive Fremstad did not disturb this tradition. She allowed Bianca Froehlich to take off the seven veils, a feat which was accomplished much more delicately at the performance than it had been at the dress rehearsal. In Paris a farce resulted from the custom when Mme. Trouhanova not only insisted on wearing a different costume from the Salome whose image she was supposed to be, but also took curtain calls. I think it was Gemma Belincioni, the Italian, who first conceived the idea of Salome dancing her own dance. She was followed by Mary Garden, who discovered what every one should have noticed in the beginning, that the composer has given the singer a long rest after the pantomimic episode.

Aside from this disturbance to the symmetry of the performance, Olive Fremstad was magnificent.

Her entrance was that of a splendid leopard, standing poised on velvet paws on the terrace, and then creeping slowly down the staircase. Her scene with Jochanaan was in truth like the storming of a fortress, and the scene with the Tetrarch was clearly realized. But it was in the closing scene of the drama that Mme. Fremstad, like the poet and the composer, achieved her most effective results. I cannot yet recall her as she crept from side to side of the well in which Jochanaan was confined, waiting for the slave to ascend with the severed head, without that shudder of fascination caused by the glimmering eyes of a monster serpent, or the sleek terribleness of a Bengal tiger. And at the end she suggested, as perhaps it has never before been suggested on the stage, the dregs of love, the refuse of gorged passion.

Singers who "create" parts in great lyric dramas have a great advantage over those who succeed them. Mary Shaw once pointed out to me the probability that Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins only won enthusiastic commendation from Bernard Shaw because they were appearing in the Ibsen plays which he was seeing for the first time. He attributed a good part of his pleasure to the interpretations of these ladies. However, he was never satisfied with their per-

formances in plays with which he was more familiar and he never again found anyone entirely to suit him in the Ibsen dramas. Albert Niemann was one of the first tenors to sing Wagner rôles and there are those alive who will tell you that he was one of the great artists, but it is perhaps because they heard him *first* in lyric dramas of such vitality that they confused singer and rôle. Beatty-Kingston, who heard him in 1866, said (in "Music and Manners") that he had torn his voice "to tatters by persistent shoutings at the top of its upper register, and undermined it by excessive worship at the shrines of Bacchus and the Paphian goddess. . . . His 'production' was characterized by a huskiness and scratchiness infinitely distressing to listen to. . . ." No allowances of this sort need be made for the deep impression made by Olive Fremstad. At the Metropolitan Opera House she followed a line of well-beloved and regal interpreters of the Wagner rôles. Both Lilli Lehmann and Milka Ternina had honoured this stage and Lillian Nordica preceded Mme. Fremstad as Kundry there. In her career at the Metropolitan, indeed, Mme. Fremstad sang only three operas at their first performances there, *Salome*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Armide*. In her other rôles she was forced to

stand comparison with a number of great artists. That she won admiration in them under the circumstances is the more fine an achievement.

I like to think, sometimes, that Olive Fremstad is the reincarnation of Guiditta Pasta, that celebrated Italian singer of the early nineteenth century, who paced triumphantly through the humbler tragedies of *Norma* and *Semiramide*. She too worked hard to gain her ends, and she gained them for a time magnificently. Henry Fothergill Chorley celebrates her art with an enthusiasm that is rare in his pages, and I like to think that he would write similar lines of eulogy about Olive Fremstad could he be called from the grave to do so. There is something of the mystic in all great singers, something incomprehensible, inexplicable, but in the truly great, the Mme. Pastas and the Mme. Fremstads, this quality outstrips all others. It is predominant. And just in proportion as this mysticism triumphs, so too their art becomes triumphant, and flames on the ramparts, a living witness before mankind to the power of the unseen.

August 17, 1916.

Geraldine Farrar



Mme. Farrar's insignia

Geraldine Farrar

THE autobiography of Geraldine Farrar is a most disappointing document; it explains nothing, it offers the reader no new insights. Given the brains of the writer and the inexhaustibility of the subject, the result is unaccountable. Any opera-goer who has followed the career of this singer with even indifferent attention will find it difficult to discover any revelation of personality or artistry in the book. Geraldine Farrar has always been a self-willed young woman with a plangent ambition and a belief in her own future which has been proved justifiable by the chronological unfolding of her stage career. These qualities are displayed over and over again in the book, together with a certain number of facts about her early life, teachers, and so on. Of that part of her personal experience which would really interest the public she gives a singularly glossed account. Very little attention is paid to composers; none at all to operas, if one may except such meagre descriptions as that accorded to *Julien*, "a hodge-podge of operatic efforts that brought little satisfaction to anybody concerned in it." There are few illuminating anecdotes; no space is devoted to an account of

how Mme. Farrar composes her rôles. She likes this one; she is indifferent to that; she detests a third; but reasons for these prejudices are rarely given. There is little manifestation of that analytic mind with which Mme. Farrar credits herself. There are sketchy references to other singers, usually highly eulogistic, but where did Mme. Farrar hear that remarkable performance of *Carmen* in which both Saleza and Jean de Reszke appeared? For my part, the most interesting lines in the book are those which close the thirteenth chapter: "I cannot say that I am much in sympathy with the vague outlines of the modern French lyric heroines; Mélisande and Ariane, I think, can be better intrusted to artists of a less positive type."

Notwithstanding the fact that she has written a rather dull book, Geraldine Farrar is one of the few really vivid personalities of the contemporary lyric stage. To a great slice of the public she is an idol in the sense that Rachel and Jenny Lind were idols. She has frequently extracted warm praise even from the cold-water taps of discriminating and ordinarily unsympathetic critics. Acting in opera she considers of greater importance than singing. She once told me that she ruthlessly sacrificed tone whenever it seemed to

interfere with dramatic effect. As an actress she has suffered from an excess of zeal, and an impatience of discipline. She composes her parts with some care, but frequently overlays her original conception with extravagant detail, added spontaneously at a performance, if her feelings so dictate.

This lawlessness sometimes leads her astray. It is an unsafe method to follow. Actors who feel the most themselves, unless the feeling is expressed in support of carefully thought-out effects, often leave their auditors cold. It is interesting to recall that Mme. Malibran, who may have excelled Mme. Farrar as a singer, had a similar passion for impromptu stage "business." She refused to give her fellow-artists any idea of how she would carry a part through, and as she allowed her feelings full sway in the matter misunderstandings frequently arose. In acting Desdemona to the Otello of the tenor, Donzelli, for example, she would not determine beforehand the exact point at which he was to seize her. Frequently she gave him a long chase and on one occasion in his pursuit he stumbled and cut himself on his unsheathed dagger. Often it has seemed that Mme. Farrar deliberately chose certain stage "business" with an eye to astounding, and not

with any particular care for the general roundness of her operatic performance. It must also be taken into consideration that no two of Mme. Farrar's impersonations of any one rôle are exactly similar, and that he who may have seen her give a magnificent performance is not too safe in recommending his meticulous neighbour to go to the next. Sometimes she is "modern" and "American" in the deprecatory sense of these words; in some of her parts she exudes no atmospheric suggestion. There are no overtones. The spectator sees exactly what is before his eyes on these occasions; there is no stimulation for the imagination to proceed further. At other times, as in her characterization of the Goosegirl in *Königskinder*, it would seem that she had extracted the last poetic meaning out of the words and music, and had succeeded in making her audience feel, not merely everything that the composer and librettist intended, but a great deal more.

At times she is a very good singer. Curiously enough, it is classic music that she usually sings best. I have heard her sing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* in a manner almost worthy of her teacher, Lilli Lehmann. There is no mention of this rôle in her book; nor of another in which she was equally successful, Rosaura in *Le Donne*

Curiose, beautifully sung from beginning to end. Mme. Farrar is musical (some singers are not; Mme. Nordica was not, for example), and I have witnessed two manifestations of this quality. On one occasion she played for me on the piano a good portion of the first act of *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, and played it brilliantly, no mean achievement. Another time I stood talking with her and her good friend, Josephine Jacoby, in the wings during the last act of a performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. There was no air of preoccupation on her part, no sense on ours that she was following the orchestra. I became so interested in our conversation, for Mme. Farrar invariably talks well, that I did not even hear the orchestra. But her mind was quite capable of taking care of two things at once. She interrupted a sentence to sing her phrase off stage, and then smilingly continued the conversation. I shall never forget this moment. To me it signified in an instant what Mme. Farrar has taken the pains to explain in pages of her autobiography and which is all summed up in her own comment, written at the time on the programme of the concert of her Boston début, May 26, 1896: "This is what I made my début in, very calm and sedate, not the least nervous."

But Mme. Farrar's vocal method is not God-given, although her voice and her assurance may be, and she sometimes has trouble in producing her upper tones. Instead of opening like a fan, her high voice is frequently pinched, and she has difficulty in singing above the staff. I have never heard her sing Butterfly's entrance with correct intonation, although I have heard her in the part many times. Her Carmen, on the whole, is a most successful performance vocally, and so is (or was) her Elizabeth, especially in the second act. The tessitura of Butterfly is very high, and the rôle is a strain for her. She has frequently said that she finds it easier to sing any two other rôles in her répertoire, and refuses to appear for two days before or after a performance of this Puccini opera.

Mme. Farrar is a fine linguist. She speaks and sings French like a Frenchwoman (I have expert testimony on this point), German like a German, and Italian like an Italian; her enunciation of English is also very clear (she has never sung in opera in English, but has often sung English songs in concert). Her enunciation of Maeterlinck's text in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* was a joy, about the only one she contributed to this performance. And in *Königskinder* and *Le Donne*

Curiose she was equally distinct. In fact there is never any difficulty about following the text of an opera when Geraldine Farrar is singing.

The rôles in which Mme. Farrar achieves her best results, according to my taste, are Manon, the Goosegirl, Margherita (in *Mefistofele*), Elizabeth, Rosaura, Suzanna, and Violetta. Cio-Cio-San, of course, is her most popular creation, and it deserves to some extent the applause of the populace, although I do not think it should be put in the above list. It is certainly not to be considered on the same plane vocally. Other rôles in which she is partially successful are Juliette and Marguerite (in Gounod's *Faust*). I think her Ariane is commonly adjudged a failure. In *Madame Sans-Gêne* she is often comic, but she does not suggest a *bourgeoise* Frenchwoman; in the court scenes she is more like a graceful woman trying to be awkward than an awkward woman trying to be graceful. Her Tosca is lacking in dignity; it is too petulant a performance, too small in conception. In failing to find adequate pleasure in her Carmen I am not echoing popular opinion.

I do not think Mme. Farrar has appeared in *La Traviata* more than two or three times at the Metropolitan Opera House, although she has

probably sung Violetta often in Berlin. On the occasion of Mme. Sembrich's farewell to the American opera stage she appeared as Flora Bervoise as a compliment to the older singer. In her biography she says that Sarah Bernhardt gave her the inspiration for the composition of the heroine of Verdi's opera. It would be interesting to have more details on this point; they are not forthcoming. Of course there have been many Violettas who have sung the music of the first act more brilliantly than Mme. Farrar; in the later acts she often sang beautifully, and her acting was highly expressive and unconventional.

She considered the rôle from the point of view of make-up. Has any one else done this? Violetta was a popular *cocotte;* consequently, she must have been beautiful. But she was a consumptive; consequently, she must have been pale. In the third act Mme. Farrar achieved a very fine dramatic effect with her costume and make-up. Her face was painted a ghastly white, a fact emphasized by her carmined lips and her black hair. She wore pale yellow and carried an enormous black fan, behind which she pathetically hid her face to cough. She introduced novelty into the part at the very beginning of the opera. Unlike most Violettas, she did not make an entrance,

but sat with her back to the audience, receiving her guests, when the curtain rose.

It has seemed strange to me that the professional reviewers should have attributed the added notes of realism in Mme. Farrar's second edition of Carmen to her appearances in the moving-picture drama. The tendencies displayed in her second year in the part were in no wise, to my mind, a result of her cinema experiences. In fact, the New York critics should have remembered that when Mme. Farrar made her début at the Metropolitan Opera House in the rôle of Juliette, they had rebuked her for these very qualities. She had indulged in a little extra realism in the bedroom and balcony scenes of Gounod's opera, of the sort with which Miss Nethersole created ten-minute furores in her performances of Carmen and Sapho. Again, as Marguerite in *Faust* (her Margherita in *Mefistofele* was a particularly repressed and dreamy representation of the German maiden, one instinct with the highest dramatic and vocal values in the prison scene), she devised "business" calculated to startle, dancing the jewel song, and singing the first stanza of the *Roi de Thulé* air from the cottage, whither she had repaired to fetch her spindle of flax — this last detail seemed to me a very good one. In

early representations of *Madama Butterfly* and *La Boheme* her death scenes were fraught with an intense realism which fitted ill with the spirit of the music. I remember one occasion in which Cio-Cio-San knocked over the rocking-chair in her death struggles, which often embraced the range of the Metropolitan stage.

These points have all been urged against her at the proper times, and there seemed small occasion for attributing her extra activities in the first act of Bizet's opera, in which the cigarette girl engaged in a prolonged scuffle with her rival in the factory, or her more recent whistling of the seguidilla, to her moving-picture experiences. No, Mme. Farrar is overzealous with her public. She once told me that at every performance she cut herself open with a knife and gave herself to the audience. This intensity, taken together with her obviously unusual talent and her personal attractiveness, is what has made her a more than ordinary success on our stage. It is at once her greatest virtue and her greatest fault, artistically speaking. Properly manacled, this quality would make her one of the finest, instead of merely one of the most popular, artists now before the public. But I cannot see how the cinema can be blamed.

Geraldine Farrar

When I first saw the Carmen of Mme. Farrar, her second or third appearance in the part, I was perplexed to find an excuse for its almost unanimous acclamation, and I sought in my mind for extraneous reasons. There was, for example, the conducting of the score by Mr. Toscanini, but that, like Mme. Farrar's interpretation of the Spanish gypsy, never found exceptional favour in my ears. Mr. Caruso's appearance in the opera could not be taken into consideration, because he had frequently sung in it before at the Metropolitan Opera House without awakening any great amount of enthusiasm. In fact, except as Des Grieux, this Italian tenor has never been popularly accepted in French opera in New York. But *Carmen* had long been out of the répertoire, and *Carmen* is an opera people like to hear. The magic of the names of Caruso, Farrar, and Toscanini may have lured auditors and critics into imagining they had heard a more effective performance than was vouchsafed them. Personally I could not compare the revival favourably with the wonderful Manhattan Opera House *Carmen*, which at its best enlisted the services of Mme. Bressler-Gianoli, the best Carmen save one that I have ever heard, Charles Dalmores, Maurice Renaud, Pauline Donalda, Charles Gilibert,

Emma Trentini, and Daddi; Cleofonte Campanini conducting.

At first, to be sure, there was no offensive overlaying of detail in Mme. Farrar's interpretation. It was not cautiously traditional, but there was no evidence that the singer was striving to stray from the sure paths. The music lies well in Mme. Farrar's voice, better than that of any other part I have heard her sing, unless it be Charlotte in *Werther*, and the music, all of it, went well, including the habanera, the seguidilla, the quintet, and the marvellous *Oui, je t'aime, Escamillo* of the last act. Her well-planned, lively dance after the gypsy song at the beginning of the second act drew a burst of applause for music usually permitted to go unrewarded. Her exit in the first act was effective, and her scene with José in the second act was excellently carried through. The card scene, as she acted it, meant very little. No strain was put upon the nerves. There was little suggestion here. The entrance of Escamillo and Carmen in an old victoria in the last act was a stroke of genius on somebody's part. I wonder if this was Mme. Farrar's idea.

But somehow, during this performance, one didn't feel there. It was no more the banks of the Guadalquiver than it was the banks of the

Hudson. *Carmen* as transcribed by Bizet and Meilhac and Halévy becomes indisputably French in certain particulars; to say that the heroine should be Spanish is not to understand the truth; Maria Gay's interpretation has taught us that, if nothing else has. But atmosphere is demanded, and that Mme. Farrar did not give us, at least she did not give it to me. In the beginning the interpretation made on me the effect of routine,— the sort of performance one can see in any first-rate European opera house,— and later, when the realistic bits were added, the distortion offended me, for French opera always demands a certain elegance of its interpreters; a quality which Mme. Farrar has exposed to us in two other French rôles.

Her Manon is really an adorable creature. I have never seen Mary Garden in this part, but I have seen many French singers, and to me Mme. Farrar transcends them all. A very beautiful and moving performance she gives, quite in keeping with the atmosphere of the opera. Her adieu to the little table and her farewell to Des Grieux in the desert always start a lump in my throat.

Her Charlotte (a rôle, I believe, cordially detested by Mme. Farrar, and one which she refuses to sing) is to me an even more moving conception.

This sentimental opera of Massenet's has never been appreciated in America at its true value, although it is one of the most frequently represented works at the Paris Opéra-Comique. When it was first introduced here by Emma Eames and Jean de Rezske, it found little favour, and later Mme. Farrar and Edmond Clément were unable to arouse interest in it (it was in *Werther*, at the New Theatre, that Alma Gluck made her operatic début, in the rôle of Sophie). But Geraldine Farrar as the hesitating heroine of the tragic and sentimental romance made the part very real, as real in its way as Henry James's "Portrait of a Lady," and as moving. The whole third act she carried through in an amazingly pathetic key, and she always sang *Les Larmes* as if her heart were really breaking.

What a charming figure she was in Wolf-Ferrari's pretty operas, *Le Donne Curiose* and *Suzannen's Geheimness!* And she sang the lovely measures with the Mozartean purity which at her best she had learned from Lilli Lehmann. Her Zerlina and her Cherubino were delightful impersonations, invested with vast roguery, although in both parts she was a trifle self-conscious, especially in her assumption of awkwardness. Her Elizabeth, sung in New York but seldom,

though she has recently appeared in this rôle with the Chicago Opera Company, was noble in conception and execution, and her Goosegirl one of the most fascinating pictures in the operatic gallery of our generation. Her Mignon was successful in a measure, perhaps not an entirely credible figure. Her Nedda was very good.

Her Louise in *Julien* was so fine dramatically, especially in the Montmartre episode, as to make one wish that she could sing the real Louise in the opera of that name. Once, however, at a performance of Charpentier's earlier work at the Manhattan Opera House, she told me that she would never, never do so. She has been known to change her mind. Her Ariane, I think, was her most complete failure. It is a part which requires plasticity and nobility of gesture and interpretation of a kind with which her style is utterly at variance. And yet I doubt if Mme. Farrar had ever sung a part to which she had given more consideration. It was for this opera, in fact, that she worked out a special method of vocal speech, half-sung, half-spoken, which enabled her to deliver the text more clearly.

Whether Mme. Farrar will undergo further artistic development I very much doubt. She tells us in her autobiography that she can study

nothing in any systematic way, and it is only through very sincere study and submission to well-intended restraint that she might develop still further into the artist who might conceivably leave a more considerable imprint on the music drama of her time. It is to be doubted if Mme. Farrar cares for these supreme laurels; her success with her public — which is pretty much all the public — is so complete in its way that she may be entirely satisfied with that by no means to be despised triumph. Once (in 1910) she gave an indication to me that this might be so, in the following words:

"Emma Calvé was frequently harshly criticized, but when she sang the opera house was crowded. It was because she gave her personality to the public. Very frequently there are singers who give most excellent interpretations, who are highly praised, and whom nobody goes to see. Now in the last analysis there are two things which I do. I try to be true to myself and my own conception of the dramatic fitness of things on the stage, and I try to please my audiences. To do that you must mercilessly reveal your personality. There is no other way. In my humble way I am an actress who happens to be appearing in opera. I sacrifice tonal beauty to dramatic fitness every

time I think it is necessary for an effect, and I shall continue to do it. I leave mere singing to the warblers. I am more interested in acting myself."

There is much that is sound sense in these remarks, but it is a pity that Mme. Farrar carries her theories out literally. To me, and to many another, there is something a little sad in the acceptance of easily won victory. If she would, Mme. Farrar might improve her singing and acting in certain rôles in which she has already appeared, and she might enlarge her répertoire to include more of the rôles which have a deeper significance in operatic and musical history. At present her activity is too consistent to allow time for much reflection. It would afford me the greatest pleasure to learn that this singer had decided to retire for a few months to devote herself to study and introspection, so that she might return to the stage with a new and brighter fire and a more lasting message.

Farrar fara — forse.

July 14, 1916.

Mary Garden

"Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."
Gertrude Stein.

Mary Garden

THE influence of Ibsen on our stage has been most subtle. The dramas of the sly Norwegian are infrequently performed, but almost all the plays of the epoch bear his mark. And he has done away with the actor, for nowadays emotions are considered rude on the stage. Our best playwrights have striven for an intellectual monotone. So it happens that for the Henry Irvings, the Sarah Bernhardts, and the Edwin Booths of a younger generation we must turn to the operatic stage, and there we find them: Maurice Renaud, Olive Fremstad — and Mary Garden.

There is nothing casual about the art of Mary Garden. Her achievements on the lyric stage are not the result of happy accident. Each detail of her impersonations, indeed, is a carefully studied and selected effect, chosen after a review of possible alternatives. Occasionally, after a trial, Miss Garden even rejects the instinctive. This does not mean that there is no feeling behind her performances. The deep burning flame of poetic imagination illuminates and warms into life the conception wrought in the study chamber. Nothing is left to chance, and it is seldom, and always for some good reason, that this artist permits

herself to alter particulars of a characterization during the course of a representation.

I have watched her many times in the same rôle without detecting any great variance in the arrangement of details, and almost as many times I have been blinded by the force of her magnetic imaginative power, without which no interpreter can hope to become an artist. This, it seems to me, is the highest form of stage art; certainly it is the form which on the whole is the most successful in exposing the intention of author and composer, although occasionally a Geraldine Farrar or a Salvini will make it apparent that the inspiration of the moment also has its value. However, I cannot believe that the true artist often experiments in public. He conceives in seclusion and exposes his conception, completely realized, breathed into, so to speak, on the stage. When he first studies a character it is his duty to feel the emotions of that character, and later he must project these across the footlights into the hearts of his audience; but he cannot be expected to feel these emotions every night. He must *remember* how he felt them before. And sometimes even this ideal interpreter makes mistakes. Neither instinct nor intelligence — not even genius — can compass every range.

Mary Garden

Miss Garden's career has been closely identified with the French lyric stage and, in at least two operas, she has been the principal interpreter — and a material factor in their success — of works which have left their mark on the epoch, stepping-stones in the musical brook. The rôles in which she has most nearly approached the ideal are perhaps Mélisande, Jean (*Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*), Sapho, Thais, Louise, Marguerite (in Gounod's *Faust*), Chrysis (in *Aphrodite*), and Monna Vanna. I cannot speak personally of her Tosca, her Orlanda, her Manon, her Violetta, or her Chérubin (in Massenet's opera of the same name). I do not care for her Carmen as a whole, and to my mind her interpretation of Salome lacks the inevitable quality which stamped Olive Fremstad's performance. In certain respects she realizes the characters and sings the music of Juliet and Ophélie, but this is *vieux jeu* for her, and I do not think she has effaced the memory of Emma Eames in the one and Emma Calvé in the other of these rôles. She was somewhat vague and not altogether satisfactory (this may be ascribed to the paltriness of the parts) as Prince Charmant in *Cendrillon, la belle* Dulcinée in *Don Quichotte,* and Grisélidis. On the other hand, in *Natoma* — her only appearance thus far in

opera in English — she made a much more important contribution to the lyric stage than either author or composer.

Mary Garden was born in Scotland, but her family came to this country when she was very young, and she grew up in the vicinity of Chicago. She may therefore be adjudged at least as much an American singer as Olive Fremstad. She studied in France, however, and this fortuitous circumstance accounts for the fact that all her great rôles are French, and for the most part modern French. Her two Italian rôles, Violetta and Tosca, she sings in French, although I believe she has made attempts to sing Puccini's opera in the original tongue. Her other ventures afield have included Salome, sung in French, and Natoma, sung in English. Her pronunciation of French on the stage has always aroused comment, some of it jocular. Her accent is strongly American, a matter which her very clear enunciation does not leave in doubt. However, it is a question in my mind if Miss Garden did not weigh well the charm of this accent and its probable effect on French auditors. You will remember that Helena Modjeska spoke English with a decided accent, as do Fritzi Scheff, Alla Nazimova, and Mitzi Hajos in our own day; you may also realize that to the public,

which includes yourself, this is no inconsiderable part of their charm. Parisians do not take pleasure in hearing their language spoken by a German, but they have never had any objection — quite the contrary — to an English or American accent on their stage, although I do not believe this general preference has ever been allowed to affect performances at the Comédie Française, except when *l'Anglais tel qu'on le parle* is on the *affiches*. At least it is certain that Miss Garden speaks French quite as easily as — perhaps more easily than — she does English, and many of the eccentricities of her stage speech are not noticeable in private life.

Many of the great artists of the theatre have owed their first opportunity to an accident; it was so with Mary Garden. She once told me the story herself and I may be allowed to repeat it in her own words, as I put them down shortly after:

"I became friends with Sybil Sanderson, who was singing in Paris then, and one day when I was at her house Albert Carré, the director of the Opéra-Comique, came to call. I was sitting by the window as he entered, and he said to Sybil, 'That woman has a profile; she would make a charming Louise.' Charpentier's opera, I should explain, had not yet been produced. 'She has a

voice, too,' Sybil added. Well, M. Carré took me to the theatre and listened while I sang airs from *Traviata* and *Manon*. Then he gave me the partition of *Louise* and told me to go home and study it. I had the rôle in my head in fifteen days. This was in March, and M. Carré engaged me to sing at his theatre beginning in October. . . . One spring day, however, when I was feeling particularly depressed over the death of a dog that had been run over by an omnibus, M. Carré came to me in great excitement; Mme. Rioton, the singer cast for the part, was ill, and he asked me if I thought I could sing Louise. I said 'Certainly,' in the same tone with which I would have accepted an invitation to dinner. It was only bluff; I had never rehearsed the part with orchestra, but it was my chance, and I was determined to take advantage of it. Besides, I had studied the music so carefully that I could have sung it note for note if the orchestra had played *The Star-Spangled Banner* simultaneously.

"Evening came and found me in the theatre. Mme. Rioton had recovered sufficiently to sing; she appeared during the first two acts, and then succumbed immediately before the air, *Depuis le Jour*, which opens the third act. I was in my dressing-room when M. Carré sent for me. He told me that

an announcement had been made before the curtain that I would be substituted for Mme. Rioton. I learned afterwards that André Messager, who was directing the orchestra, had strongly advised against taking this step; he thought the experiment was too dangerous, and urged that the people in the house should be given their money back. The audience, you may be sure, was none too pleased at the prospect of having to listen to a Mlle. Garden of whom they had never heard. Will you believe me when I tell you that I was never less nervous? . . . I must have succeeded, for I sang Louise over two hundred times at the Opéra-Comique after that. The year was 1900, and I had made my début on Friday, April 13!"

I have no contemporary criticisms of this event at hand, but one of my most valued souvenirs is a photograph of the charming interpreter as she appeared in the rôle of Louise at the beginning of her career. However, in one of Gauthier-Villars's compilations of his musical criticisms, which he signed "L'Ouvreuse" ("La Ronde des Blanches"), I discovered the following, dated February 21, 1901, a detail of a review of Gabriel Pierné's opera, *La Fille de Tabarin:* "Mlle. Garden a une aimable figure, une voix aimable, et un petit reste d'accent exotique, aimable aussi."

Of the composer of *Louise* Miss Garden had many interesting things to say in after years: "The opera is an expression of Charpentier's own life," she told me one day. "It is the opera of Montmartre, and he was the King of Montmartre, a real bohemian, to whom money and fame meant nothing. He was satisfied if he had enough to pay *consommations* for himself and his friends at the Rat Mort. He had won the *Prix de Rome* before *Louise* was produced, but he remained poor. He lived in a dirty little garret up on the *butte*, and while he was writing this realistic picture of his own life he was slowly starving to death. André Messager knew him and tried to give him money, but he wouldn't accept it. He was very proud. Messager was obliged to carry up milk in bottles, with a loaf of bread, and say that he wanted to lunch with him, in order to get Charpentier to take nourishment.

"Meanwhile, little by little, *Louise* was being slowly written. . . . Part of it he wrote in the Rat Mort, part in his own little room, and part of it in the Moulin de la Galette, one of the gayest of the Montmartre dance halls. High up on the *butte* the gaunt windmill sign waves its arms; from the garden you can see all Paris. It is the view that you get in the third act of *Louise*. . . .

The production of his opera brought Charpentier nearly half a million francs, but he spent it all on the working-girls of Montmartre. He even established a conservatory, so that those with talent might study without paying. And his mother, whom he adored, had everything she wanted until she died. . . . He always wore the artist costume, corduroy trousers, blouse, and flowing tie, even when he came to the Opéra-Comique in the evening. Money did not change his habits. His kingdom extended over all Paris after the production of *Louise*, but he still preferred his old friends in Montmartre to the new ones his success had made for him, and he dissipated his strength and talent. He was an adorable man; he would give his last sou to any one who asked for it!

"To celebrate the fiftieth performance of *Louise*, M. Carré gave a dinner in July, 1900. Most appropriately he did not choose the Café Anglais or the Café de Paris for this occasion, but Charpentier's own beloved Moulin de la Galette. It was at this dinner that the composer gave the first sign of his physical decline. He had scarcely seated himself at the table, surrounded by the great men and women of Paris, before he fainted. . . ."

The subsequent history of this composer of the lower world we all know too well; how he journeyed

south and lived in obscurity for years, years which were embellished with sundry rumours relating to future works, rumours which were finally crowned by the production of *Julien* at the Opéra-Comique — and subsequently at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The failure of this opera was abysmal.

Louise is a rôle which Miss Garden has sung very frequently in America, and, as she may be said to have contributed to Charpentier's fame and popularity in Paris, she did as much for him here. This was the second part in which she appeared in New York. The dynamics of the rôle are finely wrought out, deeply felt; the characterization is extraordinarily keen, although after the first act it never touches the heart. The singing-actress conceives the character of the sewing-girl as hard and brittle, and she does not play it for sympathy. She acts the final scene with the father with the brilliant polish of a diamond cut in Amsterdam, and with heartless brutality. Stroke after stroke she devotes to a ruthless exposure of what she evidently considers to be the nature of this futile drab. It is the scene in the play which evidently interests her most, and it is the scene to which she has given her most careful attention. In the first act, to be sure, she is *gamine* and ador-

able in her scenes with her father, and touchingly poignant in the despairing cry which closes the act, *Paris!* In the next two acts she wisely submerges herself in the general effect. She allows the sewing-girls to make the most of their scene, and, after she has sung *Depuis le Jour*, she gives the third act wholly into the keeping of the ballet, and the interpreters of Julien and the mother.

There are other ways of singing and acting this rôle. Others have sung and acted it, others will sing and act it, effectively. The abandoned (almost aggressive) perversity of Miss Garden's performance has perhaps not been equalled, but this rôle does not belong to her as completely as do Thais and Mélisande; no other interpreters will satisfy any one who has seen her in these two parts.

Miss Garden made her American début in Massenet's opera, *Thais*, written, by the way, for Sybil Sanderson. The date was November 25, 1907. Previous to this time Miss Garden had never sung this opera in Paris, but she had appeared in it during a summer season at one of the French watering places. Since that night, nearly ten years ago, however, it has become the most stable feature of her répertoire. She has sung it frequently in Paris, and during the long tours under-

taken by the Chicago Opera Company this sentimental tale of the Alexandrian courtesan and the hermit of the desert has startled the inhabitants of hamlets in Iowa and California. It is a very brilliant scenic show, and is utterly successful as a vehicle for the exploitation of the charms of a fragrant personality. Miss Garden has found the part grateful; her very lovely figure is particularly well suited to the allurements of Grecian drapery, and the unwinding of her charms at the close of the first act is an event calculated to stir the sluggish blood of a hardened theatre-goer, let alone that of a Nebraska farmer. The play becomes the more vivid as it is obvious that the retiary meshes with which she ensnares Athanaël are strong enough to entangle any of us. Thais-become-nun — Evelyn Innes should have sung this character before she became Sister Teresa — is in violent contrast to these opening scenes, but the acts in the desert, as the Alexandrian strumpet wilts before the aroused passion of the monk, are carried through with equal skill by this artist who is an adept in her means of expression and expressiveness.

The opera is sentimental, theatrical, and over its falsely constructed drama — a perversion of Anatole France's psychological tale — Massenet has

overlaid as banal a coverlet of music as could well be devised by an eminent composer. "The bad fairies have given him [Massenet] only one gift," writes Pierre Lalo, ". . . the desire to please." It cannot be said that Miss Garden allows the music to affect her interpretation. She sings some of it, particularly her part in the duet in the desert, with considerable charm and warmth of tone. I have never cared very much for her singing of the mirror air, although she is dramatically admirable at this point; on the other hand, I have found her rendering of the farewell to Eros most pathetic in its tenderness. At times she has attacked the high notes, which fall in unison with the exposure of her attractions, with brilliancy; at other times she has avoided them altogether (it must be remembered that Miss Sanderson, for whom this opera was written, had a voice like the Tour Eiffel; she sang to G above the staff). But the general tone of her interpretation has not been weakened by the weakness of the music or by her inability to sing a good deal of it. Quite the contrary. I am sure she sings the part with more steadiness of tone than Milka Ternina ever commanded for Tosca, and her performance is equally unforgettable.

After the production of *Louise*, Miss Garden's

name became almost legendary in Paris, and many are the histories of her subsequent career there. Parisians and foreign visitors alike flocked to the Opéra-Comique to see her in the series of delightful rôles which she assumed — Orlanda, Manon, Chrysis, Violetta . . . and Mélisande. It was during the summer of 1907 that I first heard her there in two of the parts most closely identified with her name, Chrysis and Mélisande.

Camille Erlanger's *Aphrodite*, considered as a work of art, is fairly meretricious. As a theatrical entertainment it offers many elements of enjoyment. Based on the very popular novel of Pierre Louÿs — at one time forbidden circulation in America by Anthony Comstock — it winds its pernicious way through a tale of prostitution, murder, theft, sexual inversion, drunkenness, sacrilege, and crucifixion, and concludes, quite simply, in a cemetery. The music is appallingly banal, and has never succeeded in doing anything else but annoy me when I have thought of it at all. It never assists in creating an atmosphere; it bears no relation to stage picture, characters, or situation. Both gesture and colour are more important factors in the consideration of the pleasurable elements of this piece than the weak trickle of its sickly melodic flow.

For the most part, at a performance, one does not listen to the music. Nevertheless, *Aphrodite* calls one again and again. Its success in Paris was simply phenomenal, and the opera is still in the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique. This success was due in a measure to the undoubted "punch" of the story, in a measure to the orgy which M. Carré had contrived to embellish the third act, culminating in the really imaginative dancing of the beautiful Regina Badet and the horrible scene of the crucifixion of the negro slave; but, more than anything else, it was due to the rarely compelling performance of Mary Garden as the courtesan who consented to exchange her body for the privilege of seeing her lover commit theft, sacrilege, and murder. In her bold entrance, flaunting her long lemon scarf, wound round her body like a Nautch girl's säri, which illy concealed her fine movements, she at once gave the picture, not alone of the *cocotte* of the period but of a whole life, a whole atmosphere, and this she maintained throughout the disclosure of the tableaux. In the prison scene she attained heights of tragic acting which I do not think even she has surpassed elsewhere. The pathos of her farewell to her two little Lesbian friends, and the gesture with which she drained the poison cup, linger in the memory,

refusing to give up their places to less potent details.

I first heard Debussy's lyric drama, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, at the Opéra-Comique, with Miss Garden as the principal interpreter. It is generally considered the greatest achievement of her mimic art. Somehow by those means at the command of a fine artist, she subdued her very definite personality and moulded it into the vague and subtle personage created by Maurice Maeterlinck. Even great artists grasp at straws for assistance, and it is interesting to know that to Miss Garden a wig is the all important thing. "Once I have donned the wig of a character, I am that character," she told me once. "It would be difficult for me to go on the stage in my own hair." Nevertheless, I believe she has occasionally inconsistently done so as Louise.

In Miss Garden's score of *Pelléas* Debussy has written, "In the future, others may sing Mélisande, but you alone will remain the woman and the artist I had hardly dared hope for." It must be remembered, however, that composers are notoriously fickle; that they prefer having their operas given in any form rather than not at all; that ink is cheap and musicians prolific in sentiments. In how many *Manon* scores did Massenet write his tender eternal finalities? Perhaps little Maggie

Teyte, who imitated Mary Garden's Mélisande as Elsie Janis imitates Sarah Bernhardt, cherishes a dedicated score now. Memory tells me I have seen such a score, but memory is sometimes a false jade.

In her faded mediæval gowns, with her long plaits of golden hair,— in the first scene she wore it loose,— Mary Garden became at once in the spectator's mind the princess of enchanted castles, the cymophanous heroine of a *féerie*, the dream of a poet's tale. In gesture and in musical speech, in tone-colour, she was faithful to the first wonderful impression of the eye. There has been in our day no more perfect example of characterization offered on the lyric stage than Mary Garden's lovely Mélisande. . . . *Ne me touchez pas!* became the cry of a terrified child, a real protestation of innocence. *Je ne suis pas heureuse ici,* was uttered with a pathos of expression which drove its helplessness into our hearts. The scene at the fountain with Pelléas, in which Mélisande loses her ring, was played with such delicate shading, such poetic imagination, that one could almost crown the interpreter as the creator, and the death scene was permeated with a fragile, simple beauty as compelling as that which Carpaccio put into his picture of *Santa Ursula*, a picture indeed which

Miss Garden's performance brought to mind more than once. If she sought inspiration from the art of the painter for her delineation, it was not to Rossetti and Burne-Jones that she went. Rather did she gather some of the soft bloom from the paintings of Bellini, Carpaccio, Giotto, Cimabue . . . especially Botticelli; had not the spirit and the mood of the two frescos from the Villa Lemmi in the Louvre come to life in this gentle representation?

Before she appeared as Mélisande in New York, Miss Garden was a little doubtful of the probable reception of the play here. She was surprised and delighted with the result, for the drama was presented in the late season of 1907-08 at the Manhattan Opera House no less than seven times to very large audiences. The singer talked to me before the event: "It took us four years to establish *Pelléas et Mélisande* in the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique. At first the public listened with disfavour or indecision, and performances could only be given once in two weeks. As a contrast I might mention the immediate success of *Aphrodite*, which I sang three or four times a week until fifty representations had been achieved, without appearing in another rôle. *Pelléas* was a different matter. The mystic beauty of the poet's mood and the rev-

olutionary procedures of the musician were not calculated to touch the great public at once. Indeed, we had to teach our audiences to enjoy it. Americans who, I am told, are fond of Maeterlinck, may appreciate its very manifest beauty at first hearing, but they didn't in Paris. At the early representations, individuals whistled and made cat-calls. One night three young men in the first row of the orchestra whistled through an entire scene. I don't believe those young men will ever forget the way I looked at them. . . . But after each performance it was the same: the applause drowned out the hisses. The balconies and galleries were the first to catch the spirit of the piece, and gradually it grew in public favour, and became a success, that is, comparatively speaking. *Pelléas et Mélisande*, like many another work of true beauty, appeals to a limited public and, consequently, the number of performances has always been limited, and perhaps always will be. I do not anticipate that it will crowd from popular favour such operas as *Werther*, *La Vie de Bohème* and *Carmen*, each of which is included in practically every week's répertoire at the Opéra-Comique.

" We interpreters of Debussy's lyric drama were naturally very proud, because we felt that we were

assisting in the making of musical history. Maeterlinck, by the way, has never seen the opera. He wished his wife, Georgette Leblanc, to 'create' the rôle of Mélisande, but Debussy and Carré had chosen me, and the poet did not have his way. He wrote an open letter to the newspapers of Paris in which he frankly expressed his hope that the work would fail. Later, when composers approached him in regard to setting his dramas to music, he made it a condition that his wife should sing them. She did appear as Ariane, you will remember, but Lucienne Bréval first sang Monna Vanna, and Maeterlinck's wrath again vented itself in pronunciamentos."

Miss Garden spoke of the settings. "The *décor* should be dark and sombre. Mrs. Campbell set the play in the Renaissance period, an epoch flooded with light and charm. I think she was wrong. Absolute latitude is permitted the stage director, as Maeterlinck has made no restrictions in the book. The director of the Opéra at Brussels followed Mrs. Campbell's example, and when I appeared in the work there I felt that I was singing a different drama."

One afternoon in the autumn of 1908, when I was Paris correspondent of the "New York Times," I received the following telegram from

Miss Garden: "Venez ce soir à 5½ chez Mlle. Chasles 112 Boulevard Malesherbes me voir en Salome." It was late in the day when the message came to me, and I had made other plans, but you may be sure I put them all aside. A *petit-bleu* or two disposed of my engagements, and I took a fiacre in the blue twilight of the Paris afternoon for the *salle de danse* of Mlle. Chasles. On my way I recollected how some time previously Miss Garden had informed me of her intention of interpreting the Dance of the Seven Veils herself, and how she had attempted to gain the co-operation of Maraquita, the ballet mistress of the Opéra-Comique, a plan which she was forced to abandon, owing to some rapidly revolving wheels of operatic intrigue. So the new Salome went to Mlle. Chasles, who sixteen years ago was delighting the patrons of the Opéra-Comique with her charming dancing. She it was who, materially assisted by Miss Garden herself, arranged the dance, dramatically significant in gesture and step, which the singer performed at the climax of Richard Strauss's music drama.

Mlle. Chasles's *salle de danse* I discovered to be a large square room; the floor had a rake like that of the Opéra stage in Paris. There were footlights, and seats in front of them for spectators.

The walls were hung with curious old prints and engravings of famous dancers, Mlle. Sallé, La Camargo, Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, and Cerito.

This final rehearsal — before the rehearsals in New York which preceded her first appearance in the part anywhere at the Manhattan Opera House — was witnessed by André Messager, who intended to mount *Salome* at the Paris Opéra the following season, Mlle. Chasles, an accompanist, a maid, a hair-dresser, and myself. I noted that Miss Garden's costume differed in a marked degree from those her predecessors had worn. For the entrance of Salome she had provided a mantle of bright orange shimmering stuff, embroidered with startling azure and emerald flowers and sparkling with spangles. Under this she wore a close-fitting garment of netted gold, with designs in rubies and rhinestones, which fell from somewhere above the waistline to her ankles. This garment was also removed for the dance, and Miss Garden emerged in a narrow strip of flesh-coloured tulle. Her arms, shoulders, and legs were bare. She wore a red wig, the hair falling nearly to her waist (later she changed this detail and wore the cropped wig which became identified with her impersonation of the part). Two jewels, an emerald on one little finger, a ruby on the other, com-

pleted her decoration. The seven veils were of soft, clinging tulle.

Swathed in these veils, she began the dance at the back of the small stage. Only her eyes were visible. Terrible, slow . . . she undulated forward, swaying gracefully, and dropped the first veil. What followed was supposed to be the undoing of the jaded Herod. I was moved by this spectacle at the time, and subsequently this pantomimic dance was generally referred to as the culminating moment in her impersonation of Salome. On this occasion, I remember, she proved to us that the exertion had not fatigued her, by singing the final scene of the music drama, while André Messager played the accompaniment on the piano.

I did not see Mary Garden's impetuous and highly curious interpretation of the strange eastern princess until a full year later, as I remained in Paris during the extent of the New York opera season. The following autumn, however, I heard *Salome* in its second season at the Manhattan Opera House — and I was disappointed. Nervous curiosity seemed to be the consistent note of this hectic interpretation. The singer was never still; her use of gesture was untiring. To any one who had not seen her in other parts, the actress must have seemed utterly lacking in repose. This

was simply her means, however, of suggesting the intense nervous perversity of Salome. Mary Garden could not have seen Nijinsky in *Scheherazade* at this period, and yet the performances were astonishingly similar in intention. But the Strauss music and the Wilde drama demand a more voluptuous and sensual treatment, it would seem to me, than the suggestion of monkey-love which absolutely suited Nijinsky's part. However, the general opinion (as often happens) ran counter to mine, and, aside from the reservation that Miss Garden's voice was unable to cope with the music, the critics, on the whole, gave her credit for an interesting performance. Indeed, in this music drama she made one of the great popular successes of her career, a career which has been singularly full of appreciated achievements.

Chicago saw Mary Garden in *Salome* a year later, and Chicago gasped, as New York had gasped when the drama was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House. The police — no less an authority — put a ban on future performances at the Auditorium. Miss Garden was not pleased, and she expressed her displeasure in the frankest terms. I received at that time a series of characteristic telegrams. One of them read: "My

art is going through the torture of slow death. Oh Paris, splendeur de mes desirs!"

It was with the (then) Philadelphia-Chicago Opera Company that Miss Garden made her first experiment with opera in English, earning thereby the everlasting gratitude and admiration — which she already possessed in no small measure — of Charles Henry Meltzer. She was not sanguine before the event. In January, 1911, she said to me: "No, malgré Tito Ricordi, NO! I don't believe in opera in English, I never have believed in it, and I don't think I ever shall believe in it. Of course I'm willing to be convinced. You see, in the first place, I think all music dramas should be sung in the languages in which they are written; well, that makes it impossible to sing anything in the current répertoire in English, doesn't it? The only hope for opera in English, so far as I can see it, lies in America or England producing a race of composers, and they haven't it in them. It isn't in the blood. Composition needs Latin blood, or something akin to it; the Anglo-Saxon or the American can't write music, great music, at least not yet. . . . I doubt if any of us alive to-day will live to hear a great work written to a libretto in our own language.

"Now I am going to sing Victor Herbert's

Natoma, in spite of what I have just told you, because I don't want to have it said that I have done anything to hinder what is now generally known as 'the cause.' For the first time a work by a composer who may be regarded as American is to be given a chance with the best singers, with a great orchestra, and a great conductor, in the leading opera house in America — perhaps the leading opera house anywhere. It seems to me that every one who can should put his shoulder to this kind of wheel and set it moving. I shall be better pleased than anybody else if *Natoma* proves a success and paves the way for the successful production of other American lyric dramas. Of course *Natoma* cannot be regarded as 'grand opera.' It is not music, like *Tristan*, for instance. It is more in the style of the lighter operas which are given in Paris, but it possesses much melodic charm and it may please the public. I shall sing it and I shall try to do it just as well as I have tried to do Salome and Thais and Mélisande."

She kept her word, and out of the hodge-podge of an opera book which stands unrivalled for its stiltedness of speech, she succeeded in creating one of her most notable characters. She threw vanity aside in making up for the rôle, painting

her face and body a dark brown; she wore two long straight braids of hair, depending on either side from the part in the middle of her forehead. Her garment was of buckskin, and moccasins covered her feet. She crept rather than walked. The story, as might be imagined, was one of love and self-sacrifice, touching here and there on the preserves of *L'Africaine* and *Lakmé*, the whole concluding with the voluntary immersion of Natoma in a convent. Fortunately, the writer of the book remembered that Miss Garden had danced in *Salome* and he introduced a similar pantomimic episode in *Natoma*, a dagger dance, which was one of the interesting points in the action. The music suited her voice; she delivered a good deal of it almost *parlando*, and the vapid speeches of Mr. Redding tripped so audibly off her tongue that their banality became painfully apparent.

The story has often been related how Massenet, piqued by the frequently repeated assertion that his muse was only at his command when he depicted female frailty, determined to write an opera in which only one woman was to appear, and she was to be both mute and a virgin! *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, perhaps the most poetically conceived of Massenet's lyric dramas, was the result of this decision. Until Mr. Hammerstein made

up his mind to produce the opera, the rôle of Jean had invariably been sung by a man. Mr. Hammerstein thought that Americans would prefer a woman in the part. He easily enlisted the interest of Miss Garden in this scheme, and Massenet, it is said, consented to make certain changes in the score. The taste of the experiment was doubtful, but it was one for which there had been much precedent. Nor is it necessary to linger on Sarah Bernhardt's assumption of the rôles of Hamlet, Shylock, and the Duc de Reichstadt. In the "golden period of song," Orfeo was not the only man's part sung by a woman. Mme. Pasta frequently appeared as Romeo in Zingarelli's opera and as Tancredi, and she also sang Otello on one occasion when Henrietta Sontag was the Desdemona. The rôle of Orfeo, I believe, was written originally for a *castrato*; and later, when the work was refurbished for production at what was then the Paris Opéra, Gluck allotted the rôle to a tenor. Now it is sung by a woman as invariably as are Stephano in *Roméo et Juliette* and Siebel in *Faust*. There is really more excuse for the masquerade of sex in Massenet's opera. The timid, pathetic little juggler, ridiculous in his inefficiency, is a part for which tenors, as they exist to-day, seem manifestly unsuited. And certainly no tenor

could hope to make the appeal in the part that Mary Garden did. In the second act she found it difficult to entirely conceal the suggestion of her sex under the monk's robe, but the sad little figure of the first act and the adorable juggler of the last, performing his imbecile tricks before Our Lady's altar, were triumphant details of an artistic impersonation; on the whole, one of Miss Garden's most moving performances.

Miss Garden has sung *Faust* many times. Are there many sopranos who have not, whatever the general nature of their répertoires? She is very lovely in the rôle of Marguerite. I have indicated elsewhere her skill in endowing the part with poetry and imaginative force without making ducks and drakes of the traditions. In the garden scene she gave an exhibition of her power to paint a fanciful fresco on a wall already surcharged with colour, a charming, wistful picture. I have never seen any one else so effective in the church and prison scenes; no one else, it seems to me, has so tenderly conceived the plight of the simple German girl. The opera of *Roméo et Juliette* does not admit of such serious dramatic treatment, and Thomas's *Hamlet*, as a play, is absolutely ridiculous. After the mad scene, for example, the stage directions read that the ballet "waltzes

sadly away." I saw Mary Garden play Ophélie once at the Paris Opéra, and I must admit that I was amused; I think she was amused too! I was equally amused some years later when I heard Titta Ruffo sing the opera. I am afraid I cannot take *Hamlet* as a lyric drama seriously.

In Paris, Violetta is one of Miss Garden's popular rôles. When she came to America she fancied she might sing the part here. "Did you ever see a thin Violetta?" she asked the reporters. But so far she has not appeared in *La Traviata* on this side of the Atlantic, although Robert Hichens wrote me that he had recently heard her in this opera at the Paris Opéra-Comique. He added that her impersonation was most interesting.

To me one of the most truly fascinating of Miss Garden's characterizations was her Fanny Legrand in Daudet's play, made into an opera by Massenet. *Sapho*, as a lyric drama, did not have a success in New York. I think only three performances were given at the Manhattan Opera House. The professional writers, with one exception, found nothing to praise in Miss Garden's remarkable impersonation of Fanny. And yet, as I have said, it seemed to me one of the most moving of her interpretations. In the opening scenes she

was the trollop, no less, that Fanny was. The pregnant line of the first act: *Artiste? . . . Non. . . . Tant mieux. J'ai contre tout artiste une haine implacable!* was spoken in a manner which bared the woman's heart to the sophisticated. The scene in which she sang the song of the *Magali* (the Provençal melody which Mistral immortalized in a poem, which Gounod introduced into *Mireille*, and which found its way, inexplicably, into the ballet of Berlioz's *Les Troyens à Carthage*), playing her own accompaniment, to Jean, was really too wonderful a caricature of the harlot. Abel Faivre and Paul Guillaume have done no better. The scene in which Fanny reviles her former associates for telling Jean the truth about her past life was revolting in its realism.

If Miss Garden spared no details in making us acquainted with Fanny's vulgarity, she was equally fair to her in other respects. She seemed to be continually guiding the spectator with comment something like this: "See how this woman can suffer, and she is a woman, like any other woman." How small the means, the effect considered, by which she produced the pathos of the last scene. At the one performance I saw half the people in the audience were in tears. There was

a dismaying display of handkerchiefs. Sapho sat in the window, smoking a cigarette, surveying the room in which she had been happy with Jean, and preparing to say good-by. In the earlier scenes her cigarette had aided her in making vulgar gestures. Now she relied on it to tell the pitiful tale of the woman's loneliness. How she clung to that cigarette, how she sipped comfort from it, and how tiny it was! Mary Garden's Sapho, which may never be seen on the stage again (Massenet's music is perhaps his weakest effort), was an extraordinary piece of stage art. That alone would have proclaimed her an interpreter of genius.

George Moore, somewhere, evolves a fantastic theory that a writer's name may have determined his talent: "Dickens — a mean name, a name without atmosphere, a black out-of-elbows, backstairs name, a name good enough for loud comedy and louder pathos. John Milton — a splendid name for a Puritan poet. Algernon Charles Swinburne — only a name for a reed through which every wind blows music. . . . Now it is a fact that we find no fine names among novelists. We find only colourless names, dry-as-dust names, or vulgar names, round names like pot-hats, those names like mackintoshes, names that are squashy as goloshes. We have charged Scott with a lack

of personal passion, but could personal passion dwell in such a jog-trot name — a round-faced name, a snub-nosed, spectacled, pot-bellied name, a placid, beneficent, worthy old bachelor name, a name that evokes all conventional ideas and formulas, a Grub Street name, a nerveless name, an arm-chair name, an old oak and Abbotsford name? And Thackeray's name is a poor one — the syllables clatter like plates. 'We shall want the carriage at half-past two, Thackeray.' Dickens is surely a name for a page boy. George Eliot's real name, Marian Evans, is a chaw-bacon, thick-loined name." So far as I know Mr. Moore has not expanded his theory to include a discussion of acrobats, revivalists, necromancers, free versifiers, camel drivers, paying tellers, painters, pugilists, architects, and opera singers. Many of the latter have taken no chances with their own names. Both Pauline and Maria Garcia adopted the names of their husbands. Garcia possibly suggests a warrior, but do Malibran and Viardot make us think of music? Nellie Melba's name evokes an image of a cold marble slab but if she had retained her original name of Mitchell it would have been no better . . . Marcella Sembrich, a name made famous by the genius and indefatigable labour of its bearer, surely not a good

name for an operatic soprano. Her own name, Kochanska, sounds Polish and patriotic . . . Luisa Tetrazzini, a silly, fussy name . . . Emma Calvé . . . Since *Madame Bovary* the name Emma suggests a solid *bourgeois* foundation, a country family. . . . Emma Eames, a chilly name . . . a wind from the East! Was it Philip Hale who remarked that she sang *Who is Sylvia?* as if the woman were not on her calling list? . . . Lillian Nordica, an evasion. Lillian Norton is a sturdy work-a-day name, suggesting a premonition of a thousand piano rehearsals for Isolde . . . Johanna Gadski, a coughing raucous name . . . Geraldine Farrar, tomboyish and impertinent, Melrose with a French sauce . . . Edyth Walker, a militant suffragette name . . . Surely Lucrezia Bori and Maria Barrientos are ill-made names for singers . . . Adelina Patti — a patty-cake, patty-cake, baker's man, sort of a name . . . Alboni, strong-hearted . . . Scalchi . . . ugh! Further evidence could be brought forward to prove that singers succeed in spite of their names rather than because of them . . . until we reach the name of Mary Garden. . . . The subtle fragrance of this name has found its way into many hearts. Since Nell Gwyn no such scented cognomen, redolent of cuckoo's boots, London pride, blood-red poppies,

purple fox-gloves, lemon stocks, and vermillion zinnias, has blown its delightful odour across our scene. . . . Delightful and adorable Mary Garden, the fragile Thais, pathetic Jean . . . unforgettable Mélisande. . . .

October 10, 1916.

Feodor Chaliapine

"Do I contradict myself?
Very well, then, I contradict myself;"

Walt Whitman.

Feodor Chaliapine

FEODOR CHALIAPINE, the Russian bass singer, appeared in New York at the Metropolitan Opera House, then under the direction of Heinrich Conried, during the season of 1907-08. He made his American début on Wednesday evening, November 20, 1907, when he impersonated the title part of Boito's opera, *Mefistofele.* He was heard here altogether seven times in this rôle; six times as Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia;* three times as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust;* three times as Leporello in *Don Giovanni;* and at several Sunday night concerts. He also appeared with the Metropolitan Opera Company in Philadelphia, and possibly elsewhere.

I first met this remarkable artist in the dining-room of the Hotel Savoy on a rainy Sunday afternoon, soon after his arrival in America. His personality made a profound impression on me, as may be gathered from some lines from an article I wrote which appeared the next morning in the "New York Times": "The newest operatic acquisition to arrive in New York is neither a prima donna soprano, nor an Italian tenor with a high C, but a big, broad-shouldered boy, with a kindly smile and a deep bass voice, . . . thirty-

four years old. . . . 'I spik English,' were his first words. 'How do you do? et puis good-by, et puis I drrrink, you drrink, he drrrrinks, et puis I love you!' . . . Mr. Chaliapine looked like a great big boy, a sophomore in college, who played football." (Pitts Sanborn soon afterwards felicitously referred to him as *ce doux géant*, a name often applied to Turgeniev.)

I have given the extent of the Russian's English vocabulary at this time, and I soon discovered that it was not accident which had caused him first to learn to conjugate the verb "to drink"; another English verb he learned very quickly was "to eat." Some time later, after his New York début, I sought him out again to urge him to give a synopsis of his original conception for a performance of Gounod's *Faust*. The interview which ensued was the longest I have ever had with any one. It began at eleven o'clock in the morning and lasted until a like hour in the evening,— it might have lasted much longer,— and during this whole time we sat at table in Mr. Chaliapine's own chamber at the Brevoort, whither he had repaired to escape steam heat, while he consumed vast quantities of food and drink. I remember a detail of six plates of onion soup. I have never seen any one else eat so much or so

continuously, or with so little lethargic effect. Indeed, intemperance seemed only to make him more light-hearted, ebullient, and Brobdingnagian. Late in the afternoon he placed his own record of the *Marseillaise* in the victrola, and then amused himself (and me) by singing the song in unison with the record, in an attempt to drown out the mechanical sound. He succeeded. The effect in this moderately small hotel room can only be faintly conceived.

Exuberant is the word which best describes Chaliapine off the stage. I remember another occasion a year later when I met him, just returned from South America, on the Boulevard in Paris. He grasped my hand warmly and begged me to come to see his zoo. He had, in fact, transformed the *salle de bain* in his suite at the Grand Hotel into a menagerie. There were two monkeys, a cockatoo, and many other birds of brilliant plumage, while two large alligators dozed in the tub.

My third interview with this singer took place a day or so before he returned to Europe. He had been roughly handled by the New York critics, treatment, it is said, which met with the approval of Heinrich Conried, who had no desire to retain in his company a bass who demanded six-

teen hundred dollars a night, a high salary for a soprano or a tenor. Stung by this defeat — entirely imaginary, by the way, as his audiences here were as large and enthusiastic as they are anywhere — the only one, in fact, which he has suffered in his career up to date, Chaliapine was extremely frank in his attitude. My interview, published on the first page of the "New York Times," created a small sensation in operatic circles. The meat of it follows. Chaliapine is speaking:

"Criticism in New York is not profound. It is the most difficult thing in the world to be a good critical writer. I am a singer, but the critic has no right to regard me merely as a singer. He must observe my acting, my make-up, everything. And he must understand and know about these things.

"Opera is not a fixed art. It is not like music, poetry, sculpture, painting, or architecture, but a combination of all of these. And the critic who goes to the opera should have studied all these arts. While a study of these arts is essential, there is something else that the critic cannot get by study, and that is the soul to understand. That he must be born with.

"I am not a professional critic, but I could be.

I have associated with musicians, painters, and writers, and I know something of all these arts. As a consequence when I read a criticism, I see immediately what is true and what is false. Very often I think a man's tongue is his worst enemy. However, sometimes a man keeps quiet to conceal his mental weakness. We have a Russian proverb which says, 'Keep quiet; don't tease the geese.' You can't judge of a man's intelligence until he begins to talk or write.

"I have been sometimes adversely criticized during the course of my artistic life. The most profound of these criticisms have taught me to correct my faults. But I have learned nothing from the criticisms I have received in New York. After searching my inner consciousness, I find they are not based on a true understanding of my artistic purposes. For instance, the critics found my Don Basilio a dirty, repulsive creature. One man even said that I was offensive to another singer on the stage! Don Basilio is a Spanish priest; it is a type I know well. He is not like the modern American priest, clean and well-groomed; he is dirty and unkempt; he is a beast, and that is what I make him, a comic beast, but the critics would prefer a softer version. . . . It is unfair, indeed, to judge me at all on the parts I

have sung here, outside of Mefistofele, for most of my best rôles are in Russian operas, which are not in the répertoire of the Metropolitan Opera House.

"The contemporary direction of this theatre believes in tradition. It is afraid of anything new. There is no movement. It has not the courage to produce novelties, and the artists are prevented from giving original conceptions of old rôles.

"New York is a vast seething inferno of business. Nothing but business! The men are so tired when they get through work that they want recreation and sleep. They don't want to study. They don't want to be thrilled or aroused. They are content to listen forever to *Faust* and *Lucia*.

"In Europe it is different. There you will find the desire for novelty in the theatre. There is a keen interest in the production of a new work. It is all right to enjoy the old things, but one should see life. The audience at the Metropolitan Opera House reminds me of a family that lives in the country and won't travel. It is satisfied with the same view of the same garden forever. . . ."

Feodor Ivanovich Chaliapine was born February 13 (February 1, old style), 1873, in Kazan; he is of peasant descent. It is said that he is al-

most entirely self-educated, both musically and intellectually. He worked for a time in a shoemaker's shop, sang in the archbishop's choir and, at the age of seventeen, joined a local operetta company. He seems to have had difficulty in collecting a salary from this latter organization, and often worked as a railway porter in order to keep alive. Later he joined a travelling theatrical troupe, which visited the Caucasus. In 1892, Oussatov, a singer, heard Chaliapine in Tiflis, gave him some lessons, and got him an engagement.

He made his début in opera in Glinka's *A Life for the Czar* (according to Mrs. Newmarch; my notes tell me that it was Gounod's *Faust*). He sang at the Summer and Panaevsky theatres in Petrograd in 1894; and the following year he was engaged at the Maryinsky Theatre, but the directors did not seem to realize that they had captured one of the great figures of the contemporary lyric stage, and he was not permitted to sing very often. In 1896, Mamantov, lawyer and millionaire, paid the fine which released the bass from the Imperial Opera House, and invited him to join the Private Opera Company in Moscow, where Chaliapine immediately proved his worth. He became the idol of the public, and it was not

unusual for those who admired striking impersonations on the stage to journey from Petrograd to see and hear him. In 1899 he was engaged to sing at the Imperial Opera in Moscow at sixty thousand roubles a year. Since then he has appeared in various European capitals, and in North and South America. He has sung in Milan, Paris, London, Monte Carlo, and Buenos Aires. During a visit to Milan he married, and at the time of his New York engagement his family included five children. The number may have increased.

Chaliapine's répertoire is extensive but, on the whole, it is a strange répertoire to western Europe and America, consisting, as it does, almost entirely of Russian operas. In Milan, New York, and Monte Carlo, where he has appeared with Italian and French companies, his most famous rôle is Mefistofele. Leporello he sang for the first time in New York. Basilio and Méphistophélès in *Faust* he has probably enacted as often in Russia as elsewhere. He " created " the title part of Massenet's *Don Quichotte* at Monte Carlo (Vanni Marcoux sang the rôle later in Paris). With the Russian Opera Company, organized in connection with the Russian Ballet by Serge de Diaghilew, Chaliapine has sung in London, Paris, and other

European capitals in Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunow* and *Khovanchina*, Rimsky-Korsakow's *Ivan the Terrible* (originally called *The Maid of Pskov)*, and Borodine's *Prince Igor*, in which he appeared both as Prince Galitzky and as the Tartar Chieftain. His répertoire further includes Rubinstein's *Demon*, Rimsky-Korsakow's *Mozart and Salieri* (the rôle of Salieri), Glinka's *A Life for the Czar*, Dargomijsky's *The Roussalka*, Rachmaninow's *Aleko*, and Gretchaninow's *Dobrynia Nikitich*. This list is by no means complete.

I first saw Chaliapine on the stage in New York, where his original ideas and tremendously vital personality ran counter to every tradition of the Metropolitan Opera House. The professional writers about the opera, as a whole, would have none of him. Even his magnificently pictorial Mefistofele was condemned, and I think Pitts Sanborn was the only man in a critic's chair — I was a reporter at this period and had no opportunity for expressing my opinions in print — who appreciated his Basilio at its true value, and *Il Barbiere* is Sanborn's favourite opera. His account of the proceedings makes good reading at this date. I quote from the "New York Globe," December 13, 1907:

"The performance that was in open defiance of

traditions, that was glaringly and recklessly unorthodox, that set at naught the accepted canons of good taste, but which justified itself by its overwhelming and all-conquering good humour, was the Basilio of Mr. Chaliapine. With his great natural stature increased by art to Brobdingnagian proportions, a face that had gazed on the vodka at its blackest, and a cassock that may be seen but not described, he presented a figure that might have been imagined by the English Swift or the French Rabelais. It was no voice or singing that made the audience re-demand the 'Calumny Song.' It was the compelling drollery of those comedy hands. You may be assured, persuaded, convinced that you want your Rossini straight or not at all. But when you see the Chaliapine Basilio you'll do as the rest do — roar. It is as sensational in its way as the Chaliapine Mephisto."

It was hard to reconcile Chaliapine's conception of Méphistophélès with the Gounod music, and I do not think the Russian himself had any illusions about his performance of *Leporello*. It was not his type of part, and he was as good in it, probably, as Olive Fremstad would be as Nedda. Even great artists have their limitations, perhaps more of them than the lesser people. But his

Mefistofele, to my way of thinking,— and the anxious reader who has not seen this impersonation may be assured that I am far from being alone in it,— was and is a masterpiece of stagecraft. However, opinions differ. Under the alluring title, "Devils Polite and Rude," W. J. Henderson, in the "New York Sun," Sunday, November 24, 1907, after Chaliapine's first appearance here in Boito's opera, took his fling at the Russian bass (was it Mr. Henderson or another who later referred to Chaliapine as "a cossack with a cold"?): "He makes of the fiend a demoniac personage, a seething cauldron of rabid passions. He is continually snarling and barking. He poses in writhing attitudes of agonized impotence. He strides and gestures, grimaces and roars. All this appears to superficial observers to be tremendously dramatic. And it is, as noted, not without its significance. Perhaps it may be only a personal fancy, yet the present writer much prefers a devil who is a gentleman. . . . But one thing more remains to be said about the first display of Mr. Chaliapine's powers. How long did he study the art of singing? Surely not many years. Such an uneven and uncertain emission of tone is seldom heard even on the Metropolitan Opera House stage,

where there is a wondrous quantity of poorly grounded singing. The splendid song, *Son lo Spirito Che Nega*, was not sung at all in the strict interpretation of the word. It was delivered, to be sure, but in a rough and barbaric style. Some of the tones disappeared somewhere in the rear spaces of the basso's capacious throat, while others were projected into the auditorium like stones from a catapult. There was much strenuosity and little art in the performance. And it was much the same with the rest of the singing of the rôle."

Chaliapine calls himself "the enemy of tradition." When he was singing at the Opera in Petrograd in 1896 he found that every detail of every characterization was prescribed. He was directed to make his entrances in a certain way; he was ordered to stand in a certain place on the stage. Whenever he attempted an innovation the stage director said, "Don't do that." Young singer though he was, he rebelled and asked, "Why not?" And the reply always came, "You must follow the tradition of the part. Monsieur Chose and Signor Cosi have always done thus and so, and you must do likewise." "But I feel differently about the rôle," protested the bass. However, it was not until he went to Moscow that he

was permitted to break with tradition. From that time on he began to elaborate his characterizations, assisted, he admits, by Russian painters who gave him his first ideas about costumes and make-up. He once told me that his interpretation of a part was never twice the same. He does not study his rôles in solitude, poring over a score, as many artists do. Rather, ideas come to him when he eats or drinks, or even when he is on the stage. He depends to an unsafe degree — unsafe for other singers who may be misled by his success — on inspiration to carry him through, once he begins to sing. "When I sing a character I am that character; I am no longer Chaliapine. So whatever I do must be in keeping with what the character would do." This is true to so great an extent that you may take it for granted, when you see Chaliapine in a new rôle, that he will envelop the character with atmosphere from his first entrance, perhaps even without the aid of a single gesture. His entrance on horseback in *Ivan the Terrible* is a case in point. Before he has sung a note he has projected the personality of the cruel czar into the auditorium.

"As an actor," writes Mrs. Newmarch in "The Russian Opera," "his greatest quality appears to me to be his extraordinary gift of identification

with the character he is representing. Shaliapin (so does Mrs. Newmarch phonetically transpose his name into Roman letters) does not merely throw himself into the part, to use a phrase commonly applied to the histrionic art. He seems to disappear, to empty himself of all personality, that Boris Godounov or Ivan the Terrible may be reincarnated for us. While working out his own conception of a part, unmoved by convention or opinion, Shaliapin neglects no accessory study that can heighten the realism of his interpretation. It is impossible to see him as Ivan the Terrible, or Boris, without realizing that he is steeped in the history of those periods, which live again at his will. In the same way he has studied the masterpieces of Russian art to good purpose, as all must agree who have compared the scene of Ivan's frenzied grief over the corpse of Olga, in the last scene of Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, with Repin's terrible picture of the Tsar, clasping in his arms the body of the son whom he has just killed in a fit of insane anger. The agonizing remorse and piteous senile grief have been transformed from Repin's canvas to Shaliapin's living picture, without the revolting suggestion of the shambles which mars the painter's work. Sometimes, too, Shaliapin will take a hint from the living model. His dignified make-up

as the Old Believer Dositheus, in Moussorgsky's *Khovanstchina*, owes not a little to the personality of Vladimir Stassov."

Chaliapine, it seems to me, has realized more completely than any other contemporary singer the opportunities afforded for the presentation of character on the lyric stage. In costume, make-up, gesture, the simulation of emotion, he is a consummate and painstaking artist. As I have suggested, he has limitations. Who, indeed, has not? Grandeur, nobility, impressiveness, and, by inversion, sordidness, bestiality, and awkward ugliness fall easily within his ken. The murder-haunted Boris Godunow is perhaps his most overpowering creation. From first to last it is a masterpiece of scenic art; those who have seen him in this part will not be satisfied with substitutes. His Ivan is almost equally great. His Dositheus, head of the Old Believers in *Khovanchina*, is a sincere and effective characterization along entirely different lines. Although this character, in a sense, dominates Moussorgsky's great opera, there is little opportunity for the display of histrionism which Boris presents to the singing actor. By almost insignificant details of make-up and gesture the bass creates before your eyes a living, breathing man, a man of fire and faith. No one would

recognize in this kind old creature, terrible, to be sure, in his stern piety, the nude Mefistofele surveying the pranks of the motley rabble in the Brocken scene of Boito's opera, a flamboyant exposure of personality to be compared with Mary Garden's Thais, Act I.

As the Tartar chieftain in *Prince Igor*, he has but few lines to sing, but his gestures during the performance of the ballet, which he has arranged for his guest, in fact his actions throughout the single act in which this character appears, are stamped on the memory as definitely as a figure in a Persian miniature. And the noble scorn with which, as Prince Galitzky, he bows to the stirrup of Prince Igor at the close of the prologue to this opera, still remains a fixed picture in my mind. There is also the pathetic Don Quichotte of Massenet's poorest opera. All great portraits these, to which I must add the funny, dirty, expectorating Spanish priest of *Il Barbiere*.

Chaliapine is the possessor of a noble voice which sometimes he uses by main strength. He has never learned to sing, in the conventional meaning of the phrase. He must have been singing for some time before he studied at all, and at Tiflis he does not seem to have spent many months on his voice. In the circumstances it is an extremely

tractable organ, at least always capable of doing his bidding, dramatically speaking. Indeed, there are many who consider him a great artist in his manipulation of it. Mrs. Newmarch quotes Herbert Heyner on this point:

"His diction floats on a beautiful cantilena, particularly in his *mezzo-voce* singing, which — though one would hardly expect it from a singer endowed with such a noble bass voice — is one of the most telling features of his performance. There is never any striving after vocal effects, and his voice is always subservient to the words. . . . The atmosphere and tone-colour which Shaliapin imparts to his singing are of such remarkable quality that one feels his interpretation of Schubert's *Doppelgänger* must of necessity be a thing of genius, unapproachable by other contemporary singers. . . . his method is based upon a thoroughly sound breath control, which produces such splendid *cantabile* results. Every student should listen to this great singer, and profit by his art."

My intention in placing before the eyes of my readers such contradictory accounts as may be found in this article has not been altogether ingenuous. The fact of the matter is that opinions differ on every matter of art, and on no point are

they so various as on that which refers to interpretation. It may further be urged that the personality of Chaliapine is so marked and his method so direct that the variations of opinion are naturally expressed in somewhat violent language.

For those, accustomed to the occidental operatic répertoire, who find it hard to understand how a bass could acquire such prominence, it may be explained that deep voices are both common and very popular in Russia. They may be heard in any Greek church, sustaining organ points a full octave below the notes to which our basses descend with trepidation. As a consequence, many of the Russian operas contain bass rôles of the first importance. In both of Moussorgsky's familiar operas, for example, the leading part is destined for a bass voice.

July 18, 1916.

Mariette Mazarin

Mariette Mazarin

SOMETIMES the cause of an intense impression in the theatre apparently disappears, leaving "not a rack behind," beyond the trenchant memory of a few precious moments, inclining one to the belief that the whole adventure has been a dream, a particularly vivid dream, and that the characters therein have returned to such places in space as are assigned to dream personages by the makers of men. This reflection comes to me as, sitting before my typewriter, I attempt to recapture the spirit of the performances of Richard Strauss's music drama *Elektra* at Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House in New York. The work remains, if not in the répertoire of any opera house in my vicinity, at least deeply imbedded in my eardrum and, if need be, at any time I can pore again over the score, which is always near at hand. But of the whereabouts of Mariette Mazarin, the remarkable artist who contributed her genius to the interpretation of the crazed Greek princess, I know nothing. As she came to us unheralded, so she went away, after we who had seen her had enshrined her, tardily to be sure, in that small, slow-growing circle of those who have achieved eminence on the lyric stage.

Before the beginning of the opera season of 1909-10, Mariette Mazarin was not even a name in New York. Even during a good part of that season she was recognized only as an able routine singer. She made her début here in *Aida* and she sang Carmen and Louise without creating a furore, almost, indeed, without arousing attention of any kind, good or bad criticism. Had there been no production of *Elektra* she would have passed into that long list of forgotten singers who appear here in leading rôles for a few months or a few years and who, when their time is up, vanish, never to be regretted, extolled, or recalled in the memory again. For the disclosure of Mme. Mazarin's true powers an unusual vehicle was required. *Elektra* gave her her opportunity, and proved her one of the exceptional artists of the stage.

I do not know many of the facts of Mariette Mazarin's career. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire; Leloir, of the Comédie Française, was her professor of acting. She made her début at the Paris Opéra as Aida; later she sang Louise and Carmen at the Opéra-Comique. After that she seems to have been a leading figure at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, where she appeared in *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Iphigénie en Aulide*, even *Orphée*, the great

Gluck répertoire. She has also sung Salome, the three Brünnhildes, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser*, in Berlioz's *Prise de Troie*, *La Damnation de Faust*, *Les Huguenots*, *Grisélidis*, *Thais*, *Il Trovatore*, *Tosca*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Herodiade*, *Le Cid*, and *Salammbô*. She has been heard at Nice, and probably on many another provincial French stage. At one time she was the wife of Léon Rothier, the French bass, who has been a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company for several seasons.

Away from the theatre I remember her as a tall woman, rather awkward, but quick in gesture. Her hair was dark, and her eyes were dark and piercing. Her face was all angles; her features were sharp, and when conversing with her one could not but be struck with a certain eerie quality which seemed to give mystic colour to her expression. She was badly dressed, both from an æsthetic and a fashionable point of view. In a group of women you would pick her out to be a doctor, a lawyer, an *intellectuelle*. When I talked with her, impression followed impression — always I felt her intelligence, the play of her intellect upon the surfaces of her art, but always, too, I felt how narrow a chance had cast her lot upon the stage, how she easily might have been something

else than a singing actress, how magnificently accidental her career was!

She was, it would seem, an unusually gifted musician — at least for a singer,— with a physique and a nervous energy which enabled her to perform miracles. For instance, on one occasion she astonished even Oscar Hammerstein by replacing Lina Cavalieri as Salomé in *Herodiade*, a rôle she had not previously sung for five years, at an hour's notice on the evening of an afternoon on which she had appeared as Elektra. On another occasion, when Mary Garden was ill she sang Louise with only a short forewarning. She told me that she had learned the music of Elektra between January 1, 1910, and the night of the first performance, January 31. She also told me that without any special effort on her part she had assimilated the music of the other two important feminine rôles in the opera, Chrysothemis and Klytæmnestra, and was quite prepared to sing them. Mme. Mazarin's vocal organ, it must be admitted, was not of a very pleasant quality at all times, although she employed it with variety and usually with taste. There was a good deal of subtle charm in her middle voice, but her upper voice was shrill and sometimes, when emitted forcefully, became in effect a shriek. Faulty intonation often

played havoc with her musical interpretation, but do we not read that the great Mme. Pasta seldom sang an opera through without many similar slips from the pitch? *Aida*, of course, displayed the worst side of her talents. Her Carmen, it seemed to me, was in some ways a very remarkable performance; she appeared, in this rôle, to be possessed by a certain *diablerie*, a power of evil, which distinguished her from other Carmens, but this characterization created little comment or interest in New York. In *Louise*, especially in the third act, she betrayed an enmity for the pitch, but in the last act she was magnificent as an actress. In Santuzza she exploited her capacity for unreined intensity of expression. I have never seen her as Salome (in Richard Strauss's opera; her Massenetic Salomé was disclosed to us in New York), but I have a photograph of her in the rôle which might serve as an illustration for the "Méphistophéla" of Catulle Mendès. I can imagine no more sinister and depraved an expression, combined with such potent sexual attraction. It is a remarkable photograph, evoking as it does a succession of lustful ladies, and it is quite unpublishable. If she carried these qualities into her performance of the work, and there is every reason to believe that she did, the even-

ings on which she sang Salome must have been very terrible for her auditors, hours in which the Aristotle theory of Katharsis must have been amply proven.

Elektra was well advertised in New York. Oscar Hammerstein is as able a showman as the late P. T. Barnum, and he has devoted his talents to higher aims. Without his co-operation, I think it is likely that America would now be a trifle above Australia in its operatic experience. It is from Oscar Hammerstein that New York learned that all the great singers of the world were not singing at the Metropolitan Opera House, a matter which had been considered axiomatic before the redoubtable Oscar introduced us to Alessandro Bonci, Maurice Renaud, Charles Dalmores, Mary Garden, Luisa Tetrazzini, and others. With his productions of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Louise*, *Thais*, and other works new to us, he spurred the rival house to an activity which has been maintained ever since to a greater or less degree. New operas are now the order of the day — even with the Chicago and the Boston companies — rather than the exception. And without this impresario's courage and determination I do not think New York would have heard *Elektra*, at least not before its uncorked essence had quite disappeared.

Lover of opera that he indubitably is, Oscar Hammerstein is by nature a showman, and he understands the psychology of the mob. Looking about for a sensation to stir the slow pulse of the New York opera-goer, he saw nothing on the horizon more likely to effect his purpose than *Elektra*. *Salome*, spurned by the Metropolitan Opera Company, had been taken to his heart the year before and, with Mary Garden's valuable assistance, he had found the biblical jade extremely efficacious in drawing shekels to his doors. He hoped to accomplish similar results with *Elektra*. . . .

One of the penalties an inventor of harmonies pays is that his inventions become shopworn. A certain terrible atmosphere, a suggestion of vague dread, of horror, of rank incest, of vile murder, of sordid shame, was conveyed in *Elektra* by Richard Strauss through the adroit use of what we call discords, for want of a better name. Discord at one time was defined as a combination of sounds that would eternally affront the musical ear. We know better now. Discord is simply the word to describe a never-before or seldom-used chord. Such a juxtaposition of notes naturally startles when it is first heard, but it is a mistake to presume that the effect is unpleasant, even in the beginning.

Now it was by the use of sounds cunningly contrived to displease the ear that Strauss built up his atmosphere of ugliness in *Elektra*. When it was first performed, the scenes in which the half-mad Greek girl stalked the palace courtyard, and the queen with the blood-stained hands related her dreams, literally reeked with musical frightfulness. I have never seen or heard another music drama which so completely bowled over its first audiences, whether they were street-car conductors or musical pedants. These scenes even inspired a famous passage in "Jean-Christophe" (I quote from the translation of Gilbert Cannon): "Agamemnon was neurasthenic and Achilles impotent; they lamented their condition at length and, naturally, their outcries produced no change. The energy of the drama was concentrated in the rôle of Iphigenia — a nervous, hysterical, and pedantic Iphigenia, who lectured the hero, declaimed furiously, laid bare for the audience her Nietzschian pessimism and, glutted with death, cut her throat, shrieking with laughter."

But will *Elektra* have the same effect on future audiences? I do not think so. Its terror has, in a measure, been dissipated. Schoenberg, Strawinsky, and Ornstein have employed its discords — and many newer ones — for pleasanter purposes,

and our ears are becoming accustomed to these assaults on the casual harmony of our forefathers. *Elektra* will retain its place as a forerunner, and inevitably it will eventually be considered the most important of Strauss's operatic works, but it can never be listened to again in that same spirit of horror and repentance, with that feeling of utter repugnance, which it found easy to awaken in 1910. Perhaps all of us were a little better for the experience.

An attendant at the opening ceremonies in New York can scarcely forget them. Cast under the spell by the early entrance of Elektra, wild-eyed and menacing, across the terrace of the courtyard of Agamemnon's palace, he must have remained with staring eyes and wide-flung ears, straining for the remainder of the evening to catch the message of this tale of triumphant and utterly holy revenge. The key of von Hofmannsthal's fine play was lost to some reviewers, as it was to Romain Rolland in the passage quoted above, who only saw in the drama a perversion of the Greek idea of Nemesis. That there was something very much finer in the theme, it was left for Bernard Shaw to discover. To him *Elektra* expressed the regeneration of a race, the destruction of vice, ignorance, and poverty. The play was replete in

his mind with sociological and political implications, and, as his views in the matter exactly coincide with my own, I cannot do better than to quote a few lines from them, including, as they do, his interesting prophecies regarding the possibility of war between England and Germany, unfortunately unfulfilled. Strauss could not quite prevent the war with his *Elektra*. Here is the passage:

"What Hofmannsthal and Strauss have done is to take Klytæmnestra and Ægisthus, and by identifying them with everything evil and cruel, with all that needs must hate the highest when it sees it, with hideous domination and coercion of the higher by the baser, with the murderous rage in which the lust for a lifetime of orgiastic pleasure turns on its slaves in the torture of its disappointment, and the sleepless horror and misery of its neurasthenia, to so rouse in us an overwhelming flood of wrath against it and a ruthless resolution to destroy it that Elektra's vengeance becomes holy to us, and we come to understand how even the gentlest of us could wield the ax of Orestes or twist our firm fingers in the black hair of Klytæmnestra to drag back her head and leave her throat open to the stroke.

"This was a task hardly possible to an ancient Greek, and not easy even for us, who are face to

face with the America of the Thaw case and the European plutocracy of which that case was only a trifling symptom, and that is the task that Hofmannsthal and Strauss have achieved. Not even in the third scene of *Das Rheingold* or in the Klingsor scene in *Parsifal* is there such an atmosphere of malignant, cancerous evil as we get here and that the power with which it is done is not the power of the evil itself, but of the passion that detests and must and finally can destroy that evil is what makes the work great and makes us rejoice in its horror.

"Whoever understands this, however vaguely, will understand Strauss's music. I have often said, when asked to state the case against the fools and the money changers who are trying to drive us into a war with Germany, that the case consists of the single word 'Beethoven.' To-day I should say with equal confidence 'Strauss.' In this music drama Strauss has done for us with utterly satisfying force what all the noblest powers of life within us are clamouring to have said in protest against and defiance of the omnipresent villainies of our civilization, and this is the highest achievement of the highest art."

Mme. Mazarin was the torch-bearer in New York of this magnificent creation. She is, indeed,

the only singer who has ever appeared in the rôle in America, and I have never heard *Elektra* in Europe. However, those who have seen other interpreters of the rôle assure me that Mme. Mazarin so far outdistanced them as to make comparison impossible. This, in spite of the fact that *Elektra* in French necessarily lost something of its crude force, and through its mild-mannered conductor at the Manhattan Opera House, who seemed afraid to make a noise, a great deal more. I did not make any notes about this performance at the time, but now, seven years later, it is very vivid to me, an unforgettable impression. Of how many nights in the theatre can I say as much?

Diabolical ecstasy was the keynote of Mme. Mazarin's interpretation, gradually developing into utter frenzy. She afterwards assured me that a visit to a madhouse had given her the inspiration for the gestures and steps of Elektra in the terrible dance in which she celebrates Orestes's bloody but righteous deed. The plane of hysteria upon which this singer carried her heroine by her pure nervous force, indeed reduced many of us in the audience to a similar state. The conventional operatic mode was abandoned; even the grand manner of the theatre was flung aside; with a wide sweep of the imagination, the singer cast the mem-

ory of all such baggage from her, and proceeded along vividly direct lines to make her impression.

The first glimpse of the half-mad princess, creeping dirty and ragged, to the accompaniment of cracking whips, across the terraced courtyard of the palace, was indeed not calculated to stir tears in the eyes. The picture was vile and repugnant; so perhaps was the appeal to the sister whose only wish was to bear a child, but Mme. Mazarin had her design; her measurements were well taken. In the wild cry to Agamemnon, the dignity and pathos of the character were established, and these qualities were later emphasized in the scene of her meeting with Orestes, beautiful pages in von Hofmannsthal's play and Strauss's score. And in the dance of the poor demented creature at the close the full beauty and power and meaning of the drama were disclosed in a few incisive strokes. Elektra's mind had indeed given way under the strain of her sufferings, brought about by her long waiting for vengeance, but it had given way under the light of holy triumph. Such indeed were the fundamentals of this tremendously moving characterization, a characterization which one must place, perforce, in that great memory gallery where hang the Mélisande of

Mary Garden, the Isolde of Olive Fremstad, and the Boris Godunow of Feodor Chaliapine.

It was not alone in her acting that Mme. Mazarin walked on the heights. I know of no other singer with the force or vocal equipment for this difficult rôle. At the time this music drama was produced its intervals were considered in the guise of unrelated notes. It was the cry that the voice parts were written without reference to the orchestral score, and that these wandered up and down without regard for the limitations of a singer. Since *Elektra* was first performed we have travelled far, and now that we have heard *The Nightingale* of Strawinsky, for instance, perusal of Strauss's score shows us a perfectly ordered and understandable series of notes. Even now, however, there are few of our singers who could cope with the music of *Elektra* without devoting a good many months to its study, and more time to the physical exercise needful to equip one with the force necessary to carry through the undertaking. Mme. Mazarin never faltered. She sang the notes with astonishing accuracy; nay, more, with potent vocal colour. Never did the orchestral flood o'ertop her flow of sound. With consummate skill she realized the composer's intentions as completely as she had those of the poet.

Those who were present at the first American performance of this work will long bear the occasion in mind. The outburst of applause which followed the close of the play was almost hysterical in quality, and after a number of recalls Mme. Mazarin fainted before the curtain. Many in the audience remained long enough to receive the reassuring news that she had recovered. As a reporter of musical doings on the "New York Times," I sought information as to her condition at the dressing-room of the artist. Somewhere between the auditorium and the stage, in a passageway, I encountered Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who, a short time before, had appeared at the Garden Theatre in Arthur Symons's translation of von Hofmannsthal's drama. Although we had never met before, in the excitement of the moment we became engaged in conversation, and I volunteered to escort her to Mme. Mazarin's room, where she attempted to express her enthusiasm. Then I asked her if she would like to meet Mr. Hammerstein, and she replied that it was her great desire at this moment to meet the impresario and to thank him for the indelible impression this evening in the theatre had given her. I led her to the corner of the stage where he sat, in his high hat, smoking his cigar, and I presented her to him.

"But Mrs. Campbell was introduced to me only three minutes ago," he said. She stammered her acknowledgment of the fact. "It's true," she said. "I have been so completely carried out of myself that I had forgotten!"

August 22, 1916.

Yvette Guilbert

"She sings of life, and mirth and all that moves
Man's fancy in the carnival of loves;
And a chill shiver takes me as she sings
The pity of unpitied human things."

Arthur Symons.

Yvette Guilbert

THE natural evolution of Gordon Craig's theory of the stage finally brought him to the point where he would dispense altogether with the play and the actor. The artist-producer would stand alone. Yvette Guilbert has accomplished this very feat, and accomplished it without the aid of super-marionettes. She still uses songs as her medium, but she has very largely discarded the authors and composers of these songs, recreating them with her own charm and wit and personality and brain. A song as Yvette Guilbert sings it exists only for a brief moment. It does not exist on paper, as you will discover if you seek out the printed version, and it certainly does not exist in the performance of any one else. Not that most of her songs are not worthy material, chosen as they are from the store-houses of a nation's treasures, but that her interpretations are so individual, so charged with deep personal feeling, so emended, so added to, so embellished with grunts, shrieks, squeaks, trills, spoken words, extra bars, or even added lines to the text; so performed that their performance itself constitutes a veritable (and, unfortunately, an extremely perishable) work of art. Sometimes, indeed, it has

seemed to me that the genius of this remarkable Frenchwoman could express itself directly, without depending upon songs.

She could have given no more complete demonstration of the inimitability of this genius than by her recent determination to lecture on the art of interpreting songs. Never has Yvette been more fascinating, never more authoritative than during those three afternoons at Maxine Elliott's Theatre, devoted ostensibly to the dissection of her method, but before she had unpacked a single instrument it must have been perfectly obvious to every auditor in the hall that she was taking great pains to explain just how impossible it would be for any one to follow in her footsteps, for any one to imitate her astonishing career. With evident candour and a multiplicity of detail she told the story of how she had built up her art. She told how she studied the words of her songs, how she planned them, what a large part the plasticity of her body played in their interpretation, and when she was done all she had said only went to prove that there is but one Yvette Guilbert.

She stripped all pretence from her vocal method, explained how she sang now in her throat, now falsetto. "When I wish to make a certain sound for a certain effect I practise by myself until I

succeed in making it. That is my vocal method. I never had a teacher. I would not trust my voice to a teacher!" Her method of learning to breathe was a practical one. She took the refrain of a little French song to work upon. She made herself learn to sing the separate phrases of this song without breathing; then two phrases together, etc., until she could sing the refrain straight through without taking a breath. Ratan Devi has told me that Indian singers, who never study vocalization in the sense that we do, are adepts in the art of breathing. "They breathe naturally and with no difficulty because it never occurs to them to distort a phrase by interrupting it for breath. They have respect for the phrase and sing it through. When you study with an occidental music teacher you will find that he will mark little Vs on the page indicating where the pupil may take breath until he can capture the length of the phrase. This method would be incomprehensible to a Hindoostanee or to any oriental." The wonderful breath control of Hebrew cantors who sing long and florid phrases without interruption is another case of the same kind.

Mme. Guilbert finds her effects everywhere, in nature, in art, in literature. When she was composing her interpretation of *La Soularde* she

searched in vain for the cry of the thoughtless children as they stone the poor drunken hag, until she discovered it, quite by accident one evening at the Comédie Française, in the shriek of Mounet-Sully in *Oedipe-Roi*. In studying the *Voyage à Bethléem*, one of the most popular songs of her répertoire, she felt the need of breaking the monotony of the stanzas. It was her own idea to interpolate the watchman's cry of the hours, and to add the jubilant coda, *Il est né, le divin enfant*, extracted from another song of the same period. With Guilbert nothing is left to chance. Do you remember one of her most celebrated chansons, *Notre Petite Compagne* of Jules Laforgue, which she sings so strikingly to a Waldteufel waltz,

Je suis la femme,
On me connait.

Her interpretation belies the lines. She has contrived to put all the mystery of the sphynx into her rendering of them. How has she done this? By means of the cigarette which she smokes throughout the song. She has confessed as much. Always on the lookout for material which will assist her in perfecting her art she has observed that when a woman smokes a cigarette her expression becomes inscrutable. Her effects are cumu-

lative, built up out of an inexhaustible fund of detail. In those songs in which she professes to do the least she is really doing the most. Have you heard her sing *Le Lien Serré* and witnessed the impression she produces by sewing, a piece of action not indicated in the text of the song? Have you heard her sing *L'Hotel Numero 3*, one of the répertoire of the *gants noirs* and the old days of the Divan Japonais? In this song she does not move her body; she scarcely makes a gesture, and yet her crisp manner of utterance, her subtle emphasis, her angular pose, are all that are needed to expose the humour of the ditty. Much the same comment could be made in regard to her interpretation of *Le Jeune Homme Triste.* The *apache* songs, on the contrary, are replete with gesture. Do you remember the splendid *apache* saluting his head before he goes to the guillotine? Again Yvette has given away her secret: "Naturally I have deep feelings. To be an artist one must feel intensely, but I find that it is sometimes well to give these feelings a spur. In this instance I have sewn weights into the lining of the cap of the *apache.* When I drop the cap it falls with a thud and I am reminded instinctively of the fall of the knife of the guillotine. This trick always furnishes me with the thrill I need and I can never sing the

last lines without tears in my eyes and voice."

It seems ungracious to speak of Yvette Guilbert as a great artist. She is so much less than that and so much more. She has dedicated her autobiography to God and it is certain that she believes her genius to be a holy thing. No one else on the stage to-day has worked so faithfully, or so long, no one else has so completely fulfilled her obligations to her art, and certainly no one else is so nearly human. She compasses the chasm between the artist and the public with ease. She is even able to do this in America, speaking a foreign tongue, for it has only been recently that she has learned to speak English freely and she rarely sings in our language. Her versatility, it seems to me, is limitless; she expresses the whole world in terms of her own personality. She never lacks for a method of expression for the effect she desires to give, and she gives all, heart and brains alike. Now she is raucous, now tender; have you ever seen so sweet a smile; have you ever observed so coarse a mien? She can run the gamut from a sleek priest to a child (as in *C'est le Mai*), from a jealous husband to a guilty wife (*Le Jaloux et la Menteuse*), from an *apache* (*Ma Tête*) to a charming old lady (*Lisette*).

It is easy to liken the art of this marvellous

woman to something concrete, to the drawings of Toulouse-Lautrec or Steinlein, the posters of Chéret . . . and there is indeed a suggestion of these men in the work of Yvette Guilbert. The same broad lines are there, the same ample style, the same complete effect, but there is more. In certain phases of her talent, the *gamine*, the *apache*, the *gavroche*, she reflects the spirit of the inspiration which kindled these painters into creation, but in other phases, of which *Lisette*, *Les Cloches de Nantes*, *La Passion*, or *Le Cycle du Vin* are the expression, you may more readily compare her style with that of Watteau, Eugene Carrière, Félicien Rops, or Boucher. . . . She takes us by the hand through the centuries, offering us the results of a vast amount of study, a vast amount of erudition, and a vast amount of work. In so many fine strokes she evokes an epoch. She has studied the distinction between a curtsey which proceeds the recital of a fable of La Fontaine and a poem of Francis Jammes. She has closely scrutinized pictures in neglected corridors of the Louvre to learn the manner in which a cavalier lifts his hat in various periods. There are those who complain that she emphasizes the dramatic side of the old French songs, which possibly survive more clearly under more naïve treatment.

Her justification in this instance is the complete success of her method. The songs serve her purpose, even supposing she does not serve theirs. But a more valid cause for grievance can be urged against her. Unfortunately and ill-advisedly she has occasionally carried something of the scientific into an otherwise delightful matinée, importing a lecturer, like Jean Beck of Bryn Mawr, to analyze and describe the music of the middle ages, or even becoming pedantic and professorial herself; sometimes Yvette preaches or, still worse, permits some one else, dancer, violinist, or singer to usurp her place on the platform. These interruptions are sorry moments indeed but such lapses are forgiven with an almost divine graciousness when Yvette interprets another song. Then the dull or scholarly interpolations are forgotten.

I cannot, indeed, know where to begin to praise her or where to stop. My feelings for her performances (which I have seen and heard whenever I have been able during the past twelve years in Chicago, New York, London, and Paris) are unequivocal. There are moments when I am certain that her rendering of *La Passion* is her supreme achievement and there are moments when I prefer to see her as the unrestrained purveyor of the art of the *chansonniers* of Montmartre — unre-

strained, I say, and yet it is evident to me that she has refined her interpretations of these songs, revived twenty-five years after she first sang them, bestowed on them a spirit which originally she could not give them. From the beginning *Ma Tête, La Soularde, La Glu, La Pierreuse,* and the others were drawn as graphically as the pictures of Steinlein, but age has softened her interpretation of them. What formerly was striking has now become beautiful, what was always astonishing has become a masterpiece of artistic expression. Once, indeed, these pictures were sharply etched, but latterly they have been lithographed, drawn softly on stone. . . . I have said that I do not know in what song, in what mood, I prefer Yvette Guilbert. I can never be certain but if I were asked to choose a programme I think I should include in it *C'est le Mai, La Légende de St. Nicolas, Le Roi a Fait Battre Tambour, Les Cloches de Nantes, Le Cycle du Vin, Le Lien Serré, La Glu, Lisette, La Femme, Que l'Amour Cause de Peine,* and Oh, how many others!

All art must be beautiful, says Mme. Guilbert, and she has realized the meaning of what might have been merely a phrase; no matter how sordid or trivial her subject she has contrived to make of it something beautiful. She is not, therefore, a

realist in any literal signification of the word (although I doubt if any actress on the stage can evoke more sense of character than she) because she always smiles and laughs and weeps with the women she represents; she sympathizes with them, she humanizes them, where another interpreter would coldly present them for an audience to take or to leave, exposing them to cruel inspection. Even in her interpretation of heartless women it is always to our sense of humour that she appeals, while in her rendering of *Ma Tête* and *La Pierreuse* she strikes directly at our hearts. Zola once told Mme. Guilbert that the *apaches* were the logical descendants of the old chevaliers of France. "They are the only men we have now who will fight over a woman!" he said. When you hear Mme. Guilbert call "*Pi-ouit!*" you will readily perceive that she understands what Zola meant.

Wonderful Yvette, who has embodied so many pleasant images in the theatre, who has expressed to the world so much of the soul of France, so much of the soul of art itself, but, above all, so much of the soul of humanity. It is not alone General Booth who has made friends of "drabs from the alley-ways and drug fiends pale — Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail! Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath, unwashed legions

with the ways of death": these are all friends of Yvette Guilbert too. And when Balzac wrote the concluding paragraph of "Massimila Doni" he may have foreseen the later application of the lines. . . . Surely "the peris, nymphs, fairies, sylphs of the olden time, the muses of Greece, the marble Virgins of the Certosa of Pavia, the Day and Night of Michael Angelo, the little angels that Bellini first drew at the foot of church paintings, and to whom Raphael gave such divine form at the foot of the Vierge au donataire, and of the Madonna freezing at Dresden; Orcagna's captivating maidens in the Church of Or San Michele at Florence, the heavenly choirs on the tombs of St. Sebald at Nuremberg, several Virgins in the Duomo at Milan, the hordes of a hundred Gothic cathedrals, the whole nation of figures who break their forms to come to you, O all-embracing artists —" surely, surely, all these hover over Yvette Guilbert.

April 16, 1917.

Waslav Nijinsky

"A thing of beauty is a boy forever."
Allen Norton.

Waslav Nijinsky

SERGE DE DIAGHILEW brought the dregs of the Russian Ballet to New York and, after a first greedy gulp, inspired by curiosity to get a taste of this highly advertised beverage, the public drank none too greedily. The scenery and the costumes, designed by Bakst, Roerich, Benois, and Larionow, and the music of Rimsky-Korsakow, Tcherepnine, Schumann, Borodine, Balakirew, and Strawinsky — especially Strawinsky — arrived. It was to be deplored, however, that Bakst had seen fit to replace the original *décor* of *Scheherazade* by a new setting in rawer colours, in which the flaming orange fairly burned into the ultramarine and green (readers of "A Rebours" will remember that des Esseintes designed a room something like this). A few of the dancers came, but of the best not a single one. Nor was Fokine, the dancer-producer, who devised the choregraphy for *The Firebird*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Petrouchka*, among the number, although his presence had been announced and expected. To those enthusiasts, and they included practically every one who had seen the Ballet in its greater glory, who had prepared their friends for an overwhemingly brilliant spectacle, over-using

the phrase, " a perfect union of the arts," the early performances in January, 1916, at the Century Theatre were a great disappointment. Often had we urged that the individual played but a small part in this new and gorgeous entertainment, but now we were forced to admit that the ultimate glamour was lacking in the ensemble, which was obviously no longer the glad, gay entity it once had been.

The picture was still there, the music (not always too well played) but the interpretation was mediocre. The agile Miassine could scarcely be called either a great dancer or a great mime. He had been chosen by Diaghilew for the rôle of Joseph in Richard Strauss's version of the Potiphar legend but, during the course of a London season carried through without the co-operation of Nijinsky, this was the only part allotted to him. In New York he interpreted, not without humour and with some technical skill, the incidental divertissement from Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *The Snow-Maiden*, against a vivid background by Larionow. The uninspired choregraphy of this ballet was also ascribed to Miassine by the programme, although probably in no comminatory spirit. In the small rôle of Eusebius in *Carneval*

and in the negligible part of the Prince in *The Firebird* he was entirely satisfactory, but it was impertinent of the direction to assume that he would prove an adequate substitute for Nijinsky in rôles to which that dancer had formerly applied his extremely finished art.

Adolf Bolm contributed his portraits of the Moor in *Petrouchka*, of Pierrot in *Carneval*, and of the Chief Warrior in the dances from *Prince Igor*. These three rôles completely express the possibilities of Bolm as a dancer or an actor, and sharply define his limitations. His other parts, Dakon in *Daphnis et Chloë* — Sadko, the Prince in *Thamar*, Amoun in *Cléopâtre*, the Slave in *Scheherazade*, and Pierrot in *Papillons*, are only variations on the three afore-mentioned themes. His friends often confuse his vitality and abundant energy with a sense of characterization and a skill as a dancer which he does not possess. For the most part he is content to express himself by stamping his heels and gnashing his teeth, and when, as in *Cléopâtre*, he attempts to convey a more subtle meaning to his general gesture, he is not very successful. Bolm is an interesting and useful member of the organization, but he could not make or unmake a season; nor could Gavrilow, who

is really a fine dancer in his limited way, although he is unfortunately lacking in magnetism and any power of characterization.

But it was on the distaff side of the cast that the Ballet seemed pitifully undistinguished, even to those who did not remember the early Paris seasons when the roster included the names of Anna Pavlowa, Tamara Karsavina, Caterina Gheltzer, and Ida Rubinstein. The leading feminine dancer of the troupe when it gave its first exhibitions in New York was Xenia Maclezova, who had not, so far as my memory serves, danced in any London or Paris season of the Ballet (except for one gala performance at the Paris Opéra which preceded the American tour), unless in some very menial capacity. This dancer, like so many others, had the technic of her art at her toes' ends. Sarah Bernhardt once told a reporter that the acquirement of technic never did any harm to an artist, and if one were not an artist it was not a bad thing to have. I have forgotten how many times Mlle. Maclezova could pirouette without touching the toe in the air to the floor, but it was some prodigious number. She was past mistress of the *entrechat* and other mysteries of the ballet academy. Here, however, her knowledge of her art seemed to end, in the subjugation of its very mech-

anism. She was very nearly lacking in those qualities of grace, poetry, and imagination with which great artists are freely endowed, and although she could not actually have been a woman of more than average weight, she often conveyed to the spectator an impression of heaviness. In such a work as *The Firebird* she really offended the eye. Far from interpreting the ballet, she gave you an idea of how it should not be done.

Her season with the Russians was terminated in very short order, and Lydia Lopoukova, who happened to be in America, and who, indeed, had already been engaged for certain rôles, was rushed into her vacant slippers. Now Mme. Lopoukova had charm as a dancer, whatever her deficiencies in technic. In certain parts, notably as Colombine in *Carneval*, she assumed a roguish demeanor which was very fetching. As La Ballerine in *Petrouchka*, too, she met all the requirements of the action. But in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Les Sylphides*, *The Firebird*, and *La Princesse Enchantée*, she floundered hopelessly out of her element.

Tchernicheva, one of the lesser but more steadfast luminaries of the Ballet, in the rôles for which she was cast, the principal Nymph in *L'Aprés-midi d'un Faune*, Echo in *Narcisse*, and the Princess in *The Firebird*, more than fulfilled her obligations to

the ensemble, but her opportunities in these mimic plays were not of sufficient importance to enable her to carry the brunt of the performances on her lovely shoulders. Flore Revalles was drafted, I understand, from a French opera company. I have been told that she sings — Tosca is one of her rôles — as well as she dances. That may very well be. To impressionable spectators she seemed a real *femme fatale.* Her Cléopâtre suggested to me a Parisian *cocotte* much more than an Egyptian queen. It would be blasphemy to compare her with Ida Rubinstein in this rôle — Ida Rubinstein, who was true Aubrey Beardsley! In Thamar and Zobeide, both to a great extent dancing rôles, Mlle. Revalles, both as dancer and actress, was but a frail substitute for Karsavina.

The remainder of the company was adequate, but not large, and the ensemble was by no means as brilliant as those who had seen the Ballet in London or Paris might have expected. Nor in the absence of Fokine, that master of detail, were performances sufficiently rehearsed. There was, of course, explanation in plenty for this disintegration. Gradually, indeed, the Ballet as it had existed in Europe had suffered a change. Only a miracle and a fortune combined would have sufficed to hold the original company intact. It was

not held intact, and the war made further inroads on its integrity. Then, for the trip to America many of the dancers probably were inclined to demand double pay. Undoubtedly, Serge de Diaghilew had many more troubles than those which were celebrated in the public prints, and it must be admitted that, even with his weaker company, he gave us finer exhibitions of stage art than had previously been even the exception here.

In the circumstances, however, certain pieces, which were originally produced when the company was in the flush of its first glory, should never have been presented here at all. It was not the part of reason, for example, to pitchfork on the Century stage an indifferent performance of *Le Pavilion d'Armide*, in which Nijinsky once disported himself as the favourite slave, and which, as a matter of fact, requires a company of *virtuosi* to make it a passable diversion. *Cléopâtre*, in its original form with Nijinsky, Fokine, Pavlowa, Ida Rubinstein, and others, hit all who saw it square between the eyes. The absurdly expurgated edition, with its inadequate cast, offered to New York, was but the palest shadow of the sensuous entertainment that had aroused all Paris, from the Batignolles to the Bastille. The music, the setting, the costumes — what else was left to

celebrate? The altered choregraphy, the deplorable interpretation, drew tears of rage from at least one pair of eyes. It was quite incomprehensible also why *The Firebird*, which depends on the grace and poetical imagination of the filmiest and most fairy-like actress-dancer, should have found a place in the répertoire. It is the dancing equivalent of a coloratura soprano rôle in opera. Thankful, however, for the great joy of having reheard Strawinsky's wonderful score, I am willing to overlook this tactical error.

All things considered, it is small wonder that a large slice of the paying population of New York tired of the Ballet in short order. One reason for this cessation of interest was the constant repetition of ballets. In London and Paris the seasons as a rule have been shorter, and on certain evenings of the week opera has taken the place of the dance. It has been rare indeed that a single work has been repeated more than three or four times during an engagement. I have not found it stupid to listen to and look at perhaps fifteen performances of varying degrees of merit of *Petrouchka*, *Scheherazade*, *Carneval*, and the dances from *Prince Igor;* I would rather see the Russian Ballet repeatedly, even as it existed in America, than four thousand five hundred and six Broad-

way plays or seventy-three operas at the Metropolitan once, but I dare say I may look upon myself as an exception.

At any rate, when the company entered upon a four weeks' engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House, included in the regular subscription season of opera, the subscribers groaned; many of them groaned aloud, and wrote letters to the management and to the newspapers. To be sure, during the tour which had followed the engagement at the Century the répertoire had been increased, but the company remained the same — until the coming of Waslav Nijinsky.

When America was first notified of the impending visit of the Russian Ballet it was also promised that Waslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina would head the organization. It was no fault of the American direction or of Serge de Diaghilew that they did not do so. Various excuses were advanced for the failure of Karsavina to forsake her family in Russia and to undertake the journey to the United States but, whatever the cause, there seems to remain no doubt that she refused to come. As for Nijinsky, he, with his wife, had been a prisoner in an Austrian detention camp since the beginning of the war. Wheels were set grinding but wheels grind slowly in an epoch of interna-

tional bloodshed, and it was not until March, 1916, that the Austrian ambassador at Washington was able to announce that Nijinsky had been set free.

I do not believe the coming to this country of any other celebrated person had been more widely advertised, although P. T. Barnum may have gone further in describing the charitable and vocal qualities of Jenny Lind. Nijinsky had been extravagantly praised, not only by the official press representatives but also by eminent critics and private persons, in adjectives which seemed to preclude any possibility of his living up to them. I myself had been among the pæan singers. I had thrust "half-man, half-god" into print. "A flame!" cried some one. Another, "A jet of water from a fountain!" Such men in the street as had taken the trouble to consider the subject at all very likely expected the arrival of some stupendous and immortal monstrosity, a gravity-defying being with sixteen feet (at least), who bounded like a rubber ball, never touching the solid stage except at the beginning and end of the evening's performance.

Nijinsky arrived in April. Almost immediately he gave vent to one of those expressions of temperament often associated with interpretative genius,

the kind of thing I have described at some length in "Music and Bad Manners." He was not at all pleased with the Ballet as he found it. Interviewed, he expressed his displeasure in the newspapers. The managers of the organization wisely remained silent, and a controversy was avoided, but the public had received a suggestion of petulancy which could not contribute to the popularity of the new dancer.

Nijinsky danced for the first time in New York on the afternoon of April 12, at the Metropolitan Opera House. The pieces in which he appeared on that day were *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Petrouchka*. Some of us feared that eighteen months in a detention camp would have stamped their mark on the dancer. As a matter of fact his connection with the Russian Ballet had been severed in 1913, a year before the war began. I can say for myself that I was probably a good deal more nervous than Nijinsky on the occasion of his first appearance in America. It would have been a cruel disappointment to me to have discovered that his art had perished during the intervening three years since I had last seen him. My fears were soon dissipated. A few seconds after he as the Rose Ghost had bounded through the window, it was evident that he was in possession of all his

powers; nay, more, that he had added to the refinement and polish of his style. I had called Nijinsky's dancing perfection in years gone by, because it so far surpassed that of his nearest rival; now he had surpassed himself. True artists, indeed, have a habit of accomplishing this feat. I may call to your attention the careers of Olive Fremstad, Yvette Guilbert, and Marie Tempest. Later I learned that this first impression might be relied on. Nijinsky, in sooth, has now no rivals upon the stage. One can only compare him with himself!

The Weber-Gautier dance-poem, from the very beginning until the end, when he leaps out of the window of the girl's chamber into the night, affords this great actor-dancer one of his most grateful opportunities. It is in this very part, perhaps, which requires almost unceasing exertion for nearly twelve minutes, that Nijinsky's powers of co-ordination, mental, imaginative, muscular, are best displayed. His dancing is accomplished in that flowing line, without a break between poses and gestures, which is the despair of all novices and almost all other *virtuosi*. After a particularly difficult leap or toss of the legs or arms, it is a marvel to observe how, without an instant's pause to regain his poise, he rhythmically glides into the

succeeding gesture. His dancing has the unbroken quality of music, the balance of great painting, the meaning of fine literature, and the emotion inherent in all these arts. There is something of transmutation in his performances; he becomes an alembic, transforming movement into a finely wrought and beautiful work of art. The dancing of Nijinsky is first an imaginative triumph, and the spectator, perhaps, should not be interested in further dissection of it, but a more intimate observer must realize that behind this the effect produced depends on his supreme command of his muscles. It is not alone the final informing and magnetized imaginative quality that most other dancers lack; it is also just this muscular co-ordination. Observe Gavrilow in the piece under discussion, in which he gives a good imitation of Nijinsky's general style, and you will see that he is unable to maintain this rhythmic continuity.

Nijinsky's achievements become all the more remarkable when one remembers that he is working with an imperfect physical medium. Away from the scene he is an insignificant figure, short and ineffective in appearance. Aside from the pert expression of his eyes, he is like a dozen other young Russians. Put him unintroduced into a

drawing-room with Jacques Copeau, Orchidæ, Doris Keane, Bill Haywood, Edna Kenton, the Baroness de Meyer, Paulet Thevenaz, the Marchesa Casati, Marcel Duchamp, Cathleen Nesbitt, H. G. Wells, Anna Pavlowa, Rudyard Chennevière, Vladimir Rebikow, Henrie Waste, and Isadora Duncan, and he probably would pass entirely unnoticed. On the stage it may be observed that the muscles of his legs are overdeveloped and his ankles are too large; that is, if you are in the mood for picking flaws, which most of us are not in the presence of Nijinsky in action. Here, however, stricture halts confounded; his head is set on his shoulders in a manner to give satisfaction to a great sculptor, and his torso, with its slender waist line, is quite beautiful. On the stage, Nijinsky makes of himself what he will. He can look tall or short, magnificent or ugly, fascinating or repulsive. Like so many interpretative artists, he remoulds himself for his public appearances. It is under the electric light in front of the painted canvas that he becomes a personality, and that personality is governed only by the scenario of the ballet he is representing.

From the day of Nijinsky's arrival, the ensemble of the Ballet improved; somewhat of the spontaneity of the European performances was regained;

a good deal of the glamour was recaptured; the loose lines were gathered taut, and the choregraphy of Fokine (Nijinsky is a director as well as a dancer) was restored to some of its former power. He has appeared in nine rôles in New York during the two short seasons in which he has been seen with the Russian Ballet here: the Slave in *Scheherazade*, Petrouchka, the Rose Ghost, the Faun, the Harlequin in *Carneval*, Narcisse, Till Eulenspiegel, and the principal male rôles of *La Princesse Enchantée* and *Les Sylphides*. To enjoy the art of Nijinsky completely, to fully appreciate his genius, it is necessary not only to see him in a variety of parts, but also to see him in the same rôle many times.

Study the detail of his performance in *Scheherazade*, for example. Its precision alone is noteworthy. Indeed, precision is a quality we see exposed so seldom in the theatre that when we find it we are almost inclined to hail it as genius. The rôle of the Slave in this ballet is perhaps Nijinsky's scenic masterpiece — exotic eroticism expressed in so high a key that its very existence seems incredible on our puritanic stage, and yet with such great art (the artist always expresses himself with beauty) that the intention is softened by the execution. Before the arrival of this dan-

cer, *Scheherazade* had become a police court scandal. There had been talk of a "Jim Crow" performance in which the blacks were to be separated from the whites in the harem, and I am told that our provincial police magistrates even wanted to replace the "mattresses" — so were the divans of the sultanas described in court — by rocking chairs! But to the considerably more vivid *Scheherazade* of Nijinsky no exception was taken. This strange, curious, head-wagging, simian creature, scarce human, wriggled through the play, leaving a long streak of lust and terror in his wake. Never did Nijinsky as the Negro Slave touch the Sultana, but his subtle and sensuous fingers fluttered close to her flesh, clinging once or twice questioningly to a depending tassel. Pierced by the javelins of the Sultan's men, the Slave's death struggle might have been revolting and gruesome. Instead, Nijinsky carried the eye rapidly upward with his tapering feet as they balanced for the briefest part of a second straight high in the air, only to fall inert with so brilliantly quick a movement that the æsthetic effect grappled successfully with the feeling of disgust which might have been aroused. This was acting, this was characterization, so completely merged in rhythm that the result became a perfect whole, and not a combina-

tion of several intentions, as so often results from the work of an actor-dancer.

The heart-breaking Petrouchka, the roguish Harlequin, the Chopiniac of *Les Sylphides*,— all were offered to our view; and *Narcisse*, in which Nijinsky not only did some very beautiful dancing, but posed (as the Greek youth admired himself in the mirror of the pool) with such utter and arresting grace that even here he awakened a definite thrill. In *La Princesse Enchantée* he merely danced, but how he danced! Do you who saw him still remember those flickering fingers and toes? "He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers," is written in the Book of Proverbs, and the writer might have had in mind Nijinsky in *La Princesse Enchantée*. All these parts were differentiated, all completely realized, in the threefold intricacy of this baffling art, which perhaps is not an art at all until it is so realized, when its plastic, rhythmic, and histrionic elements become an entity.

After a summer in Spain and Switzerland, without Nijinsky, the Russian Ballet returned to America for a second season, opening at the Manhattan Opera House October 16, 1916. It is always a delight to hear and see performances in this theatre, and it was found that the brilliance of the

Ballet was much enhanced by its new frame. The season, however, opened with a disappointment. It had been announced that Nijinsky would dance on the first night his choregraphic version of Richard Strauss's tone-poem, *Till Eulenspiegel.* It is not the first time that a press agent has enacted the rôle of Cassandra. While rehearsing the new work, Nijinsky twisted his ankle, and during the first week of the engagement he did not appear at all. This was doubly unfortunate, because the company was weaker than it had been the previous season, lacking both Miassine and Tchernicheva. The only novelty (for America) produced during the first week was an arrangement of the divertissement from Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *Sadko,* which had already been given a few times in Paris and London by the Ballet, never with conspicuous success. The second week of the season, Nijinsky returned to appear in three rôles, the Faun, Till Eulenspiegel, and the Slave in *Scheherazade.* Of his performance to Debussy's lovely music I have written elsewhere; nor did this new vision cause me to revise my opinions.

Till Eulenspiegel is the only new ballet the Russians have produced in America. (*Soleil de Nuit* was prepared in Europe, and performed once at the Paris Opéra before it was seen in New York.

Besides, it was an arrangement of dances from an opera which is frequently given in Russia and which has been presented at the Opéra-Comique in Paris.) The *chef d'orchestre*, Pierre Monteux, refused to direct performances of this work, on the ground that the composer was not only a German, but a very much alive and active German patriot. On the occasions, therefore, that *Till* was performed in New York, the orchestra struggled along under the baton of Dr. Anselm Goetzl. In selecting this work and in his arrangement of the action Nijinsky was moved, no doubt, by consideration for the limitations of the company as it existed,— from which he was able to secure the effects he desired. The scenery and costumes by Robert E. Jones, of New York, were decidedly diverting — the best work this talented young man has done, I think. Over a deep, spreading background of ultramarine, the crazy turrets of mediæval castles leaned dizzily to and fro. The costumes were exaggerations of the exaggerated fashions of the Middle Ages. Mr. Jones added feet of stature to the already elongated peaked headdresses of the period. The trains of the velvet robes, which might have extended three yards, were allowed to trail the full depth of the Manhattan Opera House stage. The colours were oranges,

reds, greens, and blues, those indeed of Bakst's *Scheherazade*, but so differently disposed that they made an entirely dissimilar impression. The effect reminded one spectator of a Spanish omelet.

In arranging the scenario, Nijinsky followed in almost every detail Wilhelm Klatte's description of the meaning of the music, which is printed in programme books whenever the tone-poem is performed, without Strauss's authority, but sometimes with his sanction. Nijinsky was quite justified in altering the end of the work, which hangs the rogue-hero, into another practical joke. His version of this episode fits the music and, in the original *Till Eulenspiegel* stories, Till is not hanged, but dies in bed. The keynote of Nijinsky's interpretation was gaiety. He was as utterly picaresque as the work itself; he reincarnated the spirit of Gil Blas; indeed, a new quality crept into stage expression through this characterization. Margaret Wycherly, one of the most active admirers of the dancer, told me after the first performance that she felt that he had for the first time leaped into the hearts of the great American public, whose appreciation of his subtler art as expressed in *Narcisse*, *Petrouchka*, and even *Scheherazade*, had been more moderate. There were those who protested that this was not the Till of the German

legends, but any actor who attempts to give form to a folk or historical character, or even a character derived from fiction, is forced to run counter to many an observer's preconceived ideas.

"It is an error to believe that pantomime is merely a way of doing without words," writes Arthur Symons, "that it is merely the equivalent of words. Pantomime is thinking overheard. It begins and ends before words have formed themselves, in a deeper consciousness than that of speech. And it addresses itself, by the artful limitations of its craft, to universal human experience, knowing that the moment it departs from those broad lines it will become unintelligible. It risks existence on its own perfection, as the rope-dancer does, to whom a false step means a downfall. And it appeals democratically to people of all nations. . . . And pantomime has that mystery which is one of the requirements of true art. To watch it is like dreaming. How silently, in dreams, one gathers the unheard sounds of words from the lips that do but make pretence of saying them! And does not every one know that terrifying impossibility of speaking which fastens one to the ground for the eternity of a second, in what is the new, perhaps truer, computation of time in dreams? Something like that sense of suspense

seems to hang over the silent actors in pantomime, giving them a nervous exaltation, which has its subtle, immediate effect upon us, in tragic and comic situation. The silence becomes an atmosphere, and with a very curious power of giving distinction to form and motion. I do not see why people should ever break silence on the stage except to speak poetry. Here, in pantomime, you have a gracious, expressive silence, beauty of gesture, a perfectly discreet appeal to the emotions, a transposition of the world into an elegant accepted convention."

Arthur Symons wrote these words before he had seen the Russian Ballet, before the Russian Ballet, as we know it, existed, indeed, before Nijinsky had begun to dance in public, and he felt that the addition of poetry and music to pantomime — the Wagner music-drama in other words — brought about a perfect combination of the arts. Nevertheless, there is an obvious application of his remarks to the present instance. There is, indeed, the quality of a dream about the characters Nijinsky presents to us. I remember once, at a performance of the Russian Ballet, I sat in a box next to a most intelligent man, a writer himself; I was meeting him for the first time, and he was seeing the Ballet for the first time. Before the

curtain rose he had told me that dancing and pantomime were very pretty to look at, but that he found no stimulation in watching them, no mental and spiritual exaltation, such as might follow a performance of *Hamlet*. Having seen Nijinsky, I could not agree with him — and this indifferent observer became that evening himself a fervent disciple of the Ballet. For Nijinsky gave him, he found, just what his ideal performance of Shakespeare's play might have given him, a basis for dreams, for thinking, for poetry. The ennobling effect of all great and perfect art, after the primary emotion, seems to be to set our minds wandering in a thousand channels, to suggest new outlets. Pater's experience before the *Monna Lisa* is only unique in its intense and direct expression.

No writer, no musician, no painter, can feel deep emotion before a work of art without expressing it in some way, although the expression may be a thousand leagues removed from the inspiration. And how few of us can view the art of Nijinsky without emotion! To the painter he gives a new sense of proportion, to the musician a new sense of rhythm, while to the writer he must perforce immediately suggest new words; better still, new meanings for old words. Dance, pantomime, acting, harmony, all these divest themselves

of their worn-out accoutrements and appear, as if clothed by magic, in garments of unheard-of novelty; hue, texture, cut, and workmanship are all a surprise to us. We look enraptured, we go away enthralled, and perhaps even unconsciously a new quality creeps into our own work. It is the same glamour cast over us by contemplation of the Campo Santo at Pisa, or the Roman Theatre at Orange, or the Cathedral at Chartres,— the inspiration for one of the most word-jewelled books in any language — or the New York sky line at twilight as one sails away into the harbour, or a great iron crane which lifts tons of alien matter in its gaping maw. Great music can give us this feeling, the symphonies of Beethoven, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Schubert's *C Major Symphony*, or César Franck's *D Minor*, *The Sacrifice to the Spring* of Strawinsky, *L'Apres-midi d'un Faune* of Debussy, Chabrier's Rhapsody, *España;* great interpretative musicians can give it to us, Ysaye at his best, Paderewski, Marcella Sembrich in song recital; but how few artists on the stage suggest even as much as the often paltry lines of the author, the often banal music of the composer! There is an *au delà* to all great interpretative art, something that remains after story, words, picture, and gesture have faded vaguely into that

storeroom in our memories where are concealed these lovely ghosts of ephemeral beauty, and the artist who is able to give us this is blessed even beyond his knowledge, for to him has been vouchsafed the sacred kiss of the gods. This quality cannot be acquired, it cannot even be described, but it can be felt. With its beneficent aid the interpreter not only contributes to our pleasure, he broadens our horizon, adds to our knowledge and capacity for feeling.

As I read over these notes I realize that I have not been able to discover flaws in the art of this young man. It seems to me that in his chosen medium he approaches perfection. What he attempts to do, he always does perfectly. Can one say as much for any other interpreter? But it is a difficult matter to give the spirit of Nijinsky, to describe his art on paper, to capture the abundant grace, the measureless poetry, the infinite illusion of his captivating motion in ink. Who can hope to do it? Future generations must take our word for his greatness. We can do little more than call it that. I shall have served my purpose if I have succeeded in this humble article in bringing back to those who have seen him a flashing glimpse of the imaginative actuality.

January 16, 1917.

The Problem of Style in the Production of Opera

"Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves."

The Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland."

The Problem of Style in the Production of Opera

WHEN some one, not reckoning the cost to my reason, casually informed me that *Marta* was to be produced with new scenery at the Metropolitan Opera House during the season of 1915–16 I literally foamed at the mouth. *Marta*, the last opera in the world to need scenery at all, to be mounted freshly, while *Götterdämmerung* and *Die Walküre*, so far as stage decoration was concerned, remained a disgrace to the institution. *Marta* is a product of one of the "great periods of song." Its protagonists are given many an opportunity to warble prettily and this warbling can be accomplished to the best effect on a stage of the epoch of its birth, that is a stage with an apron which projects into the orchestra so that when the *diva* sings she is surrounded by her auditors on three sides. Footlights, preferably gas ones, crystal chandeliers for the salon scenes, sliding "flats," and battered "sky-borders" in narrow strips for the exterior scenes, all belong to this period of opera. The soprano, the tenor, and the other singers should

advance to that point of the apron nearest the audience to deliver the roulades, trills, and other florid investiture of the music . . . and we would be transported back to the great days of Catalani, Persiani, Cinti-Damoureau, Malibran, Jenny Lind, and Sontag . . . But alas, in spite of the fact that operas written for apron stages are still frequently performed, aprons have gone out. The New York Hippodrome boasts an apron but *Marta* could not conceivably be sung there (speaking from my own point of view; from the point of view of an impressario almost any opera can be performed almost anywhere).

Marta, La Sonnambula, Lucia, Rigoletto, La Traviata would all benefit by a revival of treatment; on the other hand the operas of Mozart would be improved by new decoration, in the rococo style to be sure, and to effect the frequent changes of scene expeditiously the use of a revolving stage is advisable, but these modernites might easily be combined with the advantage of an apron stage. *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* would both be more effective if they were sung on a stage with an apron. So would *Il Barbiere di Siviglia.* Compare the effect of *Una voce poco fà* sung at the left stage centre in the "realistic" modern manner and on an apron stage and you

will understand why there were queens of song in 1840 and why there are none to-day. You will understand why men and women alike showered their favourites with bouquets of gardenias and violets, why they pelted them with bracelets and brooches. Do you suppose that Jenny Lind could repeat her success at Castle Garden in the Metropolitan Opera House? Do you fancy that Mme. Malibran could hope for much attention under present day conditions? With all due appreciation of the greatness of Mme. Melba and Mme. Sembrich, with reverence and respect for their triumphs, it must be admitted that these singers were products of that school which best flourishes on the apron stage and these triumphs, at least so far as outward manifestations go, might have been trebled if the ladies had had the opportunities of their luckier sisters, born a half century or so earlier.

The modern opera stage and the modern opera have produced the singing actress, Mary Garden, Olive Fremstad, and Geraldine Farrar. Here are ladies who achieve some of their best moments through the appeal to the eye. They are the inevitable complement of operas like *Louise*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Elektra*, *Salome*, and . . . *Madama Butterfly*, operas in which the "fourth wall" convention of Ibsen is more or less ob-

served. But these works form a very small part of the modern répertoire, which includes operas in all musical styles, the books of which demand great variety in stage decoration, different kinds of singers, different kinds of acting, and different types of stages. There are operas suitable for the apron stage and the conventions of the Forties; there are the Wagner music dramas, an invention of their composer, which require no end of special attention; there are symbolic lyric plays like *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue;* there are musical comedies like *Die Meistersinger* and *The Bartered Bride;* there are children's plays like *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Cendrillon;* there are opéras-bouffes like *La Fille de Madame Angot* and opéras-comiques like *Manon* and *Fra Diavolo;* there are operas sung in German, French, and Italian (occasionally in English and Spanish, and Russian and Bohemian operas sung in any tongue at all); there are operas which are all music and other operas which are all drama: all these are presented (some thirty-three of them during a season) on one stage, by one company (to be sure concessions are made to languages [necessarily; this is no managerial virtue] and Germans are usually engaged for the Wagner music dramas)

in more or less the same general manner. That is why the production of opera, no matter how badly done, is difficult, and seldom lucrative. There are remedies. They would involve the limitation of the répertoire (the best possible remedy, although one not complete in itself), the utilization of two or more theatres (this method is in vogue in Paris, Munich, and a few other cities), or the possible adaptation of the stage to emergencies. In addition, in order to give creditable performances of thirty-three operas, a very large company would be required and a different director for every three works, for you cannot expect one man, looking after the decoration, the lights, and the action, to produce more than three operas during one season with any degree of artistic success. Of course only a few of the operas in the répertoire of the Metropolitan Opera House each season are new. But old works cannot be reproduced without a good deal of attention.

Just by way of making my point clearer I have compiled a list of the operas sung at the Metropolitan Opera House during the season of 1914–15, which on the whole may be taken to be fairly representative, although it does not include many of the earlier operas often given such as *Orfeo, Ar-*

mide, Don Giovanni, Le Nozze di Figaro, Lucia, La Sonnambula, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia.* Here is the list:

Die Zauberflöte	1791	German
Fidelio	1805	German
Euryanthe	1823	German
Les Huguenots (sung in Italian)	1836	French
Tannhäuser	1845	German
Lohengrin	1850	German
Il Trovatore	1853	Italian
La Traviata	1853	Italian
Un Ballo in Maschera	1859	Italian
Tristan und Isolde	1865	German
Die Meistersinger	1868	German
Das Rheingold	1869	German
Die Walküre	1870	German
Aida	1871	Italian
Boris Godunow (sung in Italian)	1874	Russian
Carmen	1875	French
La Gioconda	1876	Italian
Siegfried	1876	German
Götterdämmerung	1876	German
Parsifal	1882	German
Manon	1884	French
Cavalleria Rusticana	1890	Italian
Pagliacci	1892	Italian
Manon Lescaut	1893	Italian

Hänsel und Gretel .....1893..German
La Boheme .....1896..Italian
Iris .....1898..Italian
Tosca .....1900..Italian
Madama Butterfly .....1904..Italian
L'Oracolo .....1905..Italian
Der Rosenkavalier .....1911..German
L'Amore dei Tre Re .....1913..Italian
Mme. Sans-Gêne .....1915..Italian

The dates refer to the original productions, not, of course, necessarily in New York. Aside from the contradictions indicated by dates and languages there are many others which cannot be suggested so formally. There is no account taken, in the list, for example, of the differences in styles of works of the same period and in the same language. *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Der Rosenkavalier* are German operas of the same epoch and yet they demand very different treatment in stage decoration, in song, and in action. The same principle holds good in relation to *L'Amore dei Tre Re* and *Mme. Sans-Gêne, La Boheme* and *Pagliacci.* To make my point still sharper I have prepared a list of thirty-three plays of many dates and many languages. Now in the theatre there is no musical accompaniment to a drama to prepare, no singing to be done, and yet I do not think it would be pos-

sible for a company, even as large as that of the Metropolitan Opera House, to give creditable performances of all these plays in the languages in which they were written at one theatre in one season. Miss Grace George recently succeeded in presenting, with some degree of thoroughness, five plays in a single season at the Playhouse in New York. These plays, however, were all modern comedies which did not differ markedly in style and which presented no great problems for the stage decorators . . . and they were all in English. Even so, in spite of the fact that the members of her company had been trained in pieces of this general style she found it necessary to make additions and subtractions for every change of bill. And I do not think that Miss Grace George, David Belasco, George Tyler, Arthur Hopkins, Rudolf Christians, Jacques Copeau, and the Washington Square Players together could render a satisfactory account of the following list (in the original languages) in one season at a single theatre:

William Tell
Le Barbier de Seville
La Locandiera
The Lady of Lyons
Caste
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray

Jim the Penman
Nobody's Widow
La Dame aux Camélias
Francesca da Rimini
The Seagull
Arms and the Man
Heimath
Hannele
Faust
The Colleen Bawn
Charley's Aunt
L'Aiglon
Le Voleur
The School for Scandal
Jungfrau von Orleans
Maria Stuart
The Easiest Way
Man and Superman
As You Like It
The Taming of the Shrew
Hamlet
Macbeth
La Course du Flambeau
Les Affaires Sont les Affaires
The New York Idea
Divorçons
La Tosca

There are theatres in Europe which attempt as long a list as this, notably some of the state theatres of Germany and the Comédie Française in Paris. However, in these instances certain distinctions are to be observed: (1) the entire répertoire is played in one language; (2) the majority of plays in the répertoire are written in that language; (3) the actors have been trained to be versatile and to readily suit themselves to new parts; (4) the greater number of plays at institutions of this character are not any too well performed or produced. He is a great director, for example, who can get equally fine results with *The Seagull,* in which a greater part of the play depends upon overtones, subconscious values, and *Jim the Penman,* in which a greater part of the play depends upon undertones (Curse yous hissed between the teeth), overconscious values.

I do not think a course of training will help out the operatic impresario. The father of a man I knew in college once insisted that his son skin a pig. "You never know when experience of this sort may come in handy," was the old man's explanation. So far as I know it never has. Gordon Craig advises every young man to learn how to design costumes and how to stage a play so that when he is put in charge of a theatre he will know

what to do. Yet even Gordon Craig would not, I think, be able to make appropriate decorations and arrange suitable and unconventional action for all the plays and operas I have mentioned. Further it is Craig's idea that the author should be his own costumier, stage decorator, and stage director (Craig's final decision to do away with the actor we must perforce ignore), a theory all very well for live authors but what about dead ones? Composers of opera are frequently dead. Another question arises: should the composer or his librettist be considered the author? . . . After all the rôle of the impresario is to mould the forces under him together, to arrange about payments and the collections of moneys, to see that the box office receipts do not run too far below the expenses of the theatre, and to humour recalcitrant sopranos. I have known many operatic impresarios. André Messager, once at the head of the Paris Opéra, is a composer of pretty, light operas; he is also a conductor. Andreas Dippel, who has headed both the Metropolitan and the Chicago Opera Companies, was at one time a tenor whose principal asset was an elastic répertoire which made it possible for him to replace any other tenor at twenty-four minutes' notice in almost any operatic rôle in almost any operatic language.

Neither of these men was a brilliant success as an impresario although both of them probably knew a good deal about what they wanted to accomplish. Henry Russell, once a music teacher, gave America some of the most interesting performances of operas it has had. He is particularly to be thanked for having brought Joseph Urban to us. Oscar Hammerstein was a cigar-maker (he is still on days when he is bored); Giulio Gatti-Casazza was a naval engineer; Heinrich Conried was an actor; Maurice Grau . . . Col. Mapleson . . . the list of impresarios is as long as one cares to make it . . . Oscar Hammerstein has an extraordinary flair for the production of opera, mostly the result of an inordinate and inexplicable fondness for this form of music. He has frequently been able to do what men of more experience (in this direction) and better taste have failed in doing. His productions of French opera, while often execrable so far as stage decoration was concerned, were the best that have been given in New York. *Louise*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Thais*, *Sapho*, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Carmen* all had spirit, atmosphere, and effective interpretation at the Manhattan Opera House. This was because the impresario engaged his singers with a view to their appearances

in certain operas and then encouraged them to do their best by sitting in the "first entrance" on his own stage. Maurice Grau is principally famous for having developed the "star" system. When he found a singer who could draw money in a certain opera she was exploited in that opera until the last drop of interest had been extracted from the public purse. When single stars waned he offered them in galaxies at bargain rates and so sated the public with vocal splendours in *Les Huguenots* and one or two other works that it took a decade or two to convince us afterwards that operas are just as good when they are presented by mediocre talent. Heinrich Conried did not attempt to destroy the star system immediately but he was German and economical and, little by little, he brought about a change. Like all Germans in charge of theatres he was very thorough, almost finickal. His taste was not of the best, at least in stage decoration. He inherited many of the Grau stars and he provided many more, notably Enrico Caruso. He entered into negotiations with Maurice Renaud and Luisa Tetrazzini; but it was left to Mr. Hammerstein to bring these artists to New York. His production of *Parsifal* was, according to the German traditions, very fine. He did noteworthy feats with *Hänsel und Gretel* and

Salome. But he is principally to be remembered for what he did to improve the chorus and orchestra. He provided a German chorus, indeed, which came to be one of the glories of the institution. Most of the Grau stars and some of the Conried luminaries were fading when Mr. Gatti-Casazza came into office. He has endeavoured, sometimes with success, to supply that lack. Aided by able lieutenants he has put the Opera House on a paying basis. He inherited a fine orchestra and chorus and he brought forward a genius as conductor, Arturo Toscanini. He has been professedly an enemy to modern tendencies in stage decoration, and only once, when the investiture of *Boris Godunow* was bought outright from the Russian company which produced it in Paris, has he given us a taste of the best in the new art. As for stage direction operas are produced according to tradition (the tradition of the house itself) at the Metropolitan Opera House. In the end, of course, this means dependence on an appalling amount of routine. Occasionally there are brilliant individual performances. The ensemble, chorus, orchestra, etc., are invariably good, musically speaking. The stage management is very old-fashioned and is not calculated to bring out the best in the operas presented . . . In one sense, in one very real

sense, Mr. Gatti-Casazza has done our public a service in producing such operas (some of them for the first time here) as *The Bartered Bride*, *Fidelio*, *Armide*, *Orfeo*, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Euryanthe*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Boris Godunow*, *Prince Igor* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, but it cannot be said in any of these instances (with the possible exceptions of *The Bartered Bride*, *Boris Godunow*, and, to a certain extent, *Orfeo*) that the works have been presented with full regard for their style. There were extraordinary features about the production of *Armide*, the impersonation of Olive Fremstad, the singing of Mr. Caruso, and the conducting of Mr. Toscanini, but the scenery was hopeless frippery, the stage direction sloppy, and the important ballets were massacred while Anna Pavlowa, a member of the company at the time, danced Autumn bacchanals and gave imitations of dying swans after performances of *Madama Butterfly!* She was not called in to enliven the dances of *Armide*. *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* was badly miscast. One can think of no other rôle in which Mme. Farrar has so completely failed; the settings lacked atmosphere; the lighting in the second act was in direct defiance of the explicit directions of the author. When Ariane liberates Blue Beard's

wives from their cellar prison they are supposed to glimpse the brilliant sunglare from their cave of darkness. But it was found prettier to begin the scene with a moonlight effect, and shortly after, as the lights grew brighter, the bells pealed the noonday hour! However Mr. Toscanini's orchestra was at its best in its performance of this lyric drama. One would scarcely know where to begin to find fault with the production of *Prince Igor*. Continually it seemed to give a wrong impression of the opera to the spectator and auditor. Neither scenery, action, nor vocal interpretation were appropriate.

There is certainly any amount of time and money spent on new productions at the Metropolitan, although it cannot be said that they are spent to advantage. New and elaborate scenery of the most approved Metropolitan style is supplied for each new opera. For example, regard the decorations for *Iphigénie en Tauride*, in which we find the barbarian, Thoas, worshipping in a temple which seems to have been designed by the latest architect from Athens, and such a temple! Every detail of the columns, including the shadows of the flutings, is carefully presented to the eye, as are the bas-reliefs. These details, however, are painted in perspective on flat pieces of canvas.

Now two columns, a flight of steps, a marble altar, and a back sky cloth are all the scenery one needs for this opera. The costumes, too, are such as to cause the eye to wither from sheer dread and the stage action, particularly that of the ballet, is devised to remind one that the best *Black Crook* traditions still persist. . . . Any means of stage treatment justifies its existence if it succeeds in establishing the mood or the atmosphere of an opera. But do not the contemporary means at the Metropolitan establish pretty much the same atmosphere for *Trovatore* and *Tristan und Isolde*, for *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Aida?*

It is only by specialization (or the expenditure of terrifying sums of money) that opera can be given in an artistic and (let me add) wholly effective manner. No one would fancy asking the same interpreter to sing both Manon and Isolde and yet equally stupid mistakes are made because the company is lacking in some particular personality or other. To be well given *Manon* and *Trovatore* should be performed by two entirely different casts; so should *Tristan* and *Trovatore.* But the matter does not end here. If it did we should have less to complain about, because some account is taken of a singer's adaptability for different rôles, although I have heard performances of *Faust* in

New York, to mention a familiar opera (I might have said *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* or *Prince Igor*) which might have been improved upon even in Germany. (The management must not be given credit for this distinction, however. It is rare that a singer sings many rôles well in several languages. Mme. Sembrich and Jean de Reszke are two exceptions to this rule whose names occur to me. Olive Fremstad succeeded in compassing the style of *Armide* after she had made a notable career in the Wagner music dramas; she did not, on the contrary, add to her reputation by her interpretations of Selika and Santuzza. . . . It is *necessary* for the direction to select a separate German company because the French and Italian singers do not, as a rule, sing German. [Many German singers, Mme. Gadski, for example, have a large Italian répertoire. Miss Destinn, who is a Bohemian, is one of the great Italian singers of this period of operatic art.] In the old days when French and Italian opera were in their glory here, the German works were sung in Italian . . . and in another day, the heyday of German opera, the répertoire was sung in German.) However, the greater stumbling block is the matter of production. Hardly four operas in this list can be found which require the same type of stage decoration;

many would be improved if they were to be given on a stage of a different kind or size; all of them would make more effect if some account were taken of their style. Of course, something ought to be done merely to avoid monotony if for no other reason. How tiresome it is to watch the characters in *Manon*, *Tosca*, and *Siegfried* making exactly the same stupid stereotyped operatic gestures! What a bore to observe the same brush strokes and colours in the scenery.

Of the three French words in this list two could be sung with better effect in a small theatre, *Carmen* and *Manon*. They both belong to the classification known as opéra-comique. They demand of their interpreters a special style in acting and singing, a style never perfectly realized by other than French singers, or singers trained in the French style. Mr. Caruso is not such a singer (although no French tenor could have given more heavenly utterance to the beautiful melodies of *Armide*). Jean de Reszke was; Sybil Sanderson was; Clotilde Bressler-Gianoli was; Emma Calvé is; Mary Garden is. Curiously enough Geraldine Farrar is in certain rôles, and it must not be forgotten that she received a good part of her training in Paris. Lucien Muratore, Jeanne Maubourg, Maurice Renaud, Edmond Clément, are all

singers trained in the French style and when a French opera is sung with such singers in the cast one is sure of the result . . . The other French opera in the list, *Les Huguenots,* is not opéra-comique. It is " grand opera " and for its proper interpretation it requires a semblance of the French grand manner. Several of the singers I have just mentioned can counterfeit it excellently. . . . Meyerbeer's masterpiece, however, is not Italian opera and singing it in Italian will not make it so.

Let us consider the staging of these works. *Carmen* is an opera often acted in the extreme " realistic " manner, and yet Carmen's escape over the bridge at the end of the first act is managed in such a fashion (invariably) that the credulity of the spectator is imposed upon. This must be the fault of the arrangement of the setting or of the stage management. The present decoration (and such others as I have seen there) for the last act of *Carmen* at the Metropolitan Opera House is ridiculous. The observer is obliged to ignore the obvious possibility that Carmen could escape from her maddened persecutor in nearly every direction. Exits on all sides but no place for Carmen to go! At the Opéra-Comique in Paris the bull-ring is placed at the back of the stage, the door in the centre. Shops with arcades, very much like

those of the Rue Royale in Paris, hem in the sides of the stage. The only entrances to the scene are from the gate of the bull-ring and from the street which runs parallel with the footlights at the front of the stage. Sometime during her scene with José Carmen attempts to re-enter the ring but discovers that the gate has been locked. As she turns up the narrow *impasse* she looks from right to left. There is no way of escape . . . and when José finally stabs her she is attempting to climb the gate into the ring. I do not believe that attention to such details mars the production of a drama. If I were engaging an artist to paint scenery for a play it seems to me that I would expect him to think of them. It is incredible but ordinarily no one at the Metropolitan Opera House ever does think of them. The scenic artist for *Carmen* should consider the aspects of the drama from every possible point of view. Then he should try to give his scenery intention. The decorations, mostly sunny exteriors, should blaze with colour. Joseph Urban might do something right here if he hasn't already . . . But I would not ask Joseph Urban to paint *Manon*. The same artist might conceivably paint the settings (which should be charmingly rococo) for *Manon*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Le Nozze di Figaro*, although

it would take a versatile director to stage all these works. I think Robert Locher would do the painting for them very nicely. He would make just the right distinctions in colour and line between the boudoirs of Manon, the Countess, and the Marschallin . . . It is all very well for Gordon Craig to say that the decorator, the actor, and the director are all working for their own ends and not for the play. It is all very well for him to insist that all these faculties be invested in one person. The question is, when *Don Giovanni* or *Rienzi* or *Werther* is concerned, *who* is that person? We must content ourselves, I think, until the republic of Utopia, or Gordon Craig's ideal theatre, is established, with a stage director who supervises all the details in an attempt to produce unity. In other words the different toilers in the theatre must work together for a common end, perfection. The Washington Square Players, in some of their productions, are well on the way towards this goal.

The works of Wagner demand a manner of treatment all their own. The Master thought they required a theatre to themselves and I am not sure that he wasn't right. It is certain that he invented a new form of drama, but it is equally certain that many composers since his time have

written works in this form. There are a few other operas which might conceivably be presented in a Wagner Theatre, if it were not too large, *Aida, Les Huguenots, La Gioconda* . . . certain works of Gluck, *Armide*, for example. I have written out elsewhere a few of my ideas concerning the staging of the Wagner music dramas and I have referred at some length to Adolphe Appia's book on the subject. Until Appia's theories, and his lovely designs for stage settings, have been tested on our stage it seems unnecessary to search farther. Appia has taken the pains to indicate not only the lighting ("Apollo was not only the god of music, he was also the god of light") of the scenes but also the position and often the gestures of the characters in their relation to the decoration and the lighting. He saw clearly enough that Wagner had invented a form of drama which he himself did not know how to produce with the means at hand. Now in this matter the directors of the Metropolitan Opera House have been blameless, or blind. They have followed, at a respectable distance to be sure, but at considerable expense, the best European productions of the Wagner plays . . . but there has never been a production of the Wagnerian works anywhere which realized the ideals of the Master, although

in Germany the principle of the exclusion of late comers and the use of a sunken orchestra pit certainly improve matters.

It is conceivable, of course, that operas like *Aida*, *Il Trovatore*, *Les Huguenots*, and *Götterdämmerung* might be given satisfactory performances on the same stage but if they were included in a single season they demand a triple series of interpreters and different stage directors. I should like to hear *Trovatore* sung with the melodramatic intensity that the music suggests, but there is no Tamagno to-day, and no rendering of *Di Quella Pira* has ever frozen my blood, or made every separate hair stand on end, as it should. For Meyerbeer's opera we must search the great French manner in acting and singing, and a refinement of gesture in the interpreters which is not a requirement for a performance of Verdi's opera. The scenery for both these works is negligible (although there is no particular reason why it should not be pleasant to look upon). I mean that any flapping canvas will do if the proper tentings and palaces are painted thereon . . . but good scenery in modern Russian style is essential to a perfect performance of *Boris Godunow*.

Fidelio, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *Euryanthe* are all German operas and they all were originally pro-

duced within a period of thirty-two years. Nevertheless if the same man paints the scenery for all these plays he must be an artist of exceptional talent. The sombre decoration of *Fidelio* must be a sounding board for Beethoven's noble music, a background for the noble passions of his protagonists . . . Bakst should be the next designer for a production of Mozart's fantastic holiday masonic play and I am not sure that Florenz Ziegfeld should not stage it. At any rate the opera should be put on, in certain of the scenes, in romping merry mood; these episodes should offer the greatest possible contrast to the serious scenes in which Sarastro figures. *Euryanthe* leads us into romantic Germany and for both stage decorator and stage director a new problem is posed . . . problems entirely apart from those of vocal styles. It is a clever and accomplished singer who can enact both Pamina and Leonora, who can sing both *Ach, ich fühl's, es ist entschwunden* and *Abscheulicher* with equal success.

I have indicated, briefly, some of the reasons why we do not see (and hear) satisfactory performances of opera. There are others. In an opera house, first of all, there is tradition, which is followed by certain stage directors when it does not interfere with expedience. In the end this min-

gling of tradition with expedience makes a *new* tradition which is established for a particular theatre. Operas like *Madama Butterfly* and *Aida* which are presented year after year, are given without orchestral rehearsals, the manner of the house is so well established in regard to them. But there are those who always fight against tradition (I may mention Geraldine Farrar and Feodor Chaliapine) and who frequently make changes in their individual performances. So frequently we see members of the same cast playing in different styles against scenery which has nothing to do with the purpose of the opera (which reminds you of all the other scenery you have ever seen in the same house), and with a stage manager who is glad enough to get the opera on without a break-down. Lyric dramas — at least those in the répertoire — are frequently produced after a single piano rehearsal by singers who have never appeared together before and who may never appear together again. In a sense they are all familiar with the stage routine, although they may differ in detail, but in no instance (at least at the Metropolitan Opera House) unless a new work is under consideration, is the action, the lighting, and the scenic investiture studied from beginning to end in an attempt to make a perfect whole of it. Nor would

it be possible, under conditions as they exist, to do so even if the director of the theatre so desired. There is no time. The ordinary rehearsals in an opera house consume all the extra moments and the flesh and blood and breath control of the men of the orchestra will not permit them to rehearse every day and play every evening. How would it be possible to devote a week to the preparation of *Il Trovatore?* And yet if it could be done it would be found that the result would repay those who had done it. None of us has ever heard a good performance of this opera, one of Verdi's best, although we have frequently seen pains expended, even if wrongly, on *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*.

Extraordinary conductors like Arturo Toscanini and Arthur Nikisch, brilliant singing actors like Olive Fremstad and Feodor Chaliapine, scene painters like Bakst and Roerich, stage directors like Appia and Stanislawsky all exist in the world but they do not exist in combination. Sometimes a great conductor can lift a performance to such heights that details — important details, at that — are forgotten in the ensuing pleasure; sometimes a single singer, Mary Garden in *Pelléas et Mélisande* or Marcella Sembrich in *La Traviata* (no longer, alas!) can make us forget that we are in the theatre at all and we overlook the shabby,

inadequate, or utterly wrong scenery, the weakness of the supporting cast, the shiftless stage direction, and the mixture of styles. There are few of us, however, who can say that we have seen a dozen really remarkable performances of opera, considering all the composer's and librettist's intentions. Aside from the scenery the performance of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Metropolitan Opera House with Mme. Sembrich, and Messrs. Bonci, Chaliapine, and Campanari lives in the memory; Serge de Diaghilew's company has given adequate vocal and histrionic support to the genius of Feodor Chaliapine and the scenery of Bakst and Fedorowsky in *La Khovanchina* and *Boris Godunow;* and the Russian production of Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *The Golden Cock,* in London and Paris, in which the characters were impersonated by dancers while the music was rendered by singers, was a delightfully successful experiment. There have been wonderful performances, in recent years, of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Götterdämmerung* at the Metropolitan Opera House, conducted by Gustav Mahler and Arturo Toscanini, in which Mme. Fremstad appeared, but the tenors in every instance, to say nothing of other members of the cast, have been unsatisfactory, and the stage decoration has been shabby and the lighting ineffective. . . . *Pelléas*

et Mélisande, as produced at the Paris Opéra-Comique, approached perfection, although the orchestra might have been improved and the scenes painted with a more cymaphonous effect. The lighting was good. The New York decoration for this play was even less appropriate but the orchestra here was better.

In Munich (and similar attempts at restoration are made in other German capitals) we have the delightful performances of Mozart operas during a festival week at the tiny Residenz Theater. The small auditorium brings the players into close intimacy with the public; a revolving stage shifts the succession of scenes swiftly towards the finales; and the conductor presides at a harpsichord over a miniature orchestra. Wagner's dramas are given as well as he knew (and Cosima knows) how at the Prinzregenten Theatre in Munich and at the festival theatre in Bayreuth . . . I believe that better singing actors and modern taste applied to the stage could improve even these institutions, however, better though they may be than the best we have in America. At least there is an attempt made to do honour to the works. At the Scala in Milan and at some other Italian theatres the répertoire of a season is limited, say to eight operas. This allows the director to engage his company

for the season with regard for the demands of these special works and it also permits his subordinates ample time for the necessary rehearsals.

There have been few attempts made at "stylization" in the production of opera, aside from the productions of the Russians, and a few productions in Germany (I do not know if Ludwig Sievert's scenic inventions for *Parsifal* were ever produced at the Freiburg Municipal Theatre for which they were destined in 1914), although, even in New York, such attempts are common enough in the theatre (the productions at the Century [made by Joseph Urban], the Comedy [where the Washington Square Players are installed] and the Neighbourhood Playhouse are invariably interesting). Louis Sherwin has recently told us in a brilliant article that the best modern staging in New York is to be seen in musical comedy. In 1913 Jaques-Dalcroze gave performances of Gluck's *Orfeo* in the great hall of his School of Eurythmics at Hellerau. In the representation of this piece no division was made between stage and auditorium (Adolphe Appia was one of the producers and at present he is entirely concerned with this problem, how to unite spectator and actor). Players and spectators were in the same light, a diffused light resembling daylight without visible sun, a system

invented by A. von Salzmann. "This effect," according to a description by Frank E. Washburn Freund, "was obtained by means of innumerable but invisible electric lights placed behind the transparent covering of the wall, so that the hall seemed to glow with light instead of being lit from an external source. The stage itself — in so far as it can be called a stage — consisted merely of a platform divided into three parts and connected by a flight of steps, which lent themselves splendidly to effective groupings and processions. On this platform simple pieces of furniture necessary to the action were placed, such as the funeral urn. All realistic decoration was thus avoided, and even the surroundings were merely indicated; for example, the impression of a wood was suggested by long stripes, the vertical lines of which created in the mind of the audience an impression of trees, and tuned their thoughts to the right rhythm." It may be added that Jaques-Dalcroze placed his singers in the orchestra so that the characters on the stage merely enacted their parts. Appia was not at all satisfied with this production, in which he worked with two other men. The lighting (for which von Salzmann was entirely responsible) especially disturbed him. Of course shadows were impossible. It may further be urged against it

that the auditors, many of them in shirt waist and skirt, which is the indispensable uniform of a German woman, must have been sadly out of the picture of which they formed a part. The experiment was interesting but it proved to be only an experiment.

Meyerhold in his book, "The Theatre," thus describes his production of *Orfeo* at the Imperial Opera in Petrograd: "We divided the stage into two strictly separated parts: the front part, where there was no painting and where everything was arranged with textiles; and the back part, given over to the dominion of painting. Special importance was given to places which determined the level; for the connecting passages between the two determined the positions and path of motion of the various characters. Thus, in the second scene, the path of Orpheus to Hades lies from an enormous height downward, while on both sides, in front, there are two large rocky projections. With such an arrangement, the figure of Orpheus does not mingle with the mass of the Furies, but dominates them. The positions of the two large rocky projections on both sides of the stage make it impossible to mass the chorus and ballet in any other way than in the form of two groups extending upwards from the two side-scenes. Thus the action

of Orpheus is not broken up in a series of episodes; rather, these are synthetically expressed in two struggling movements: the movement of Orpheus rushing downward, on one hand; and on the other, the movement of the Furies, which at first meet Orpheus sternly, but finally make peace with him. Here the location of the groups is strictly determined by the distribution of the raised surfaces, which were worked out by the artist and manager.

"The chorus in Elysium was removed behind the side-scenes. That allowed us to do away with the usual discord between the chorus and ballet, which as yet do not blend on the stage. If the chorus had been left on the stage it would have been noticed at once that one group was singing while the other was dancing, whereas the homogeneous character of the group in Elysium (the Happy Shades) demands that the plastic expression be of one kind.

"In the second scene of the third act, Love, who has just brought Eurydice back to life, leads her and Orpheus to the fore-stage in front of the proscenium arch while pronouncing the last phrase of his recitative. When Orpheus, Eurydice, and Love, step forward the landscape behind them is covered by the dropping of the main curtain, and the actors sing the concluding trio as though it

were a concert number. During the singing of the trio, the scene is changed."

There is a remedy for conditions as they exist in New York — in fact there are several but they are expensive and drastic. It is possible that in time the Metropolitan Opera House may outlive its usefulness and be replaced. Until that time arrives it may be suggested that a smaller theatre might be provided for certain works that would be more effective in a less ample auditorium. Then possibly such singers as Mabel Garrison, whose lovely voice was heard to advantage in Albert Reiss's special production of Mozart's *Schauspieldirector* at the Empire Theatre (October, 1916), might have their opportunity. The répertoire of the parent house might in itself be limited. Do you not imagine that the subscribers would prefer hearing a stirring performance twice to a spiritless representation once. If the répertoire comprised twelve operas these would suffice for a subscription season of twenty-four weeks, each opera to be given twice to each set of subscribers. Limitation of the répertoire seems one of the essential remedies. Combine as you will you cannot select perfect casts out of a possible hundred singers for as eclectic a series of operas as that which comprises the usual répertoire of the Metropolitan Opera House, es-

pecially to-day when fine acting is as necessary to the production of an opera as fine singing. In some operas it is more necessary, and it must not be overlooked that some of the most famous lyric artists of the Nineteenth Century were imperfect singers, Mme. Pasta and Pauline Viardot, for example, and Signor Ronconi, all of whom were superb histrions. Nor can your scene painters or your stage decorators do justice to or give variety to so large a répertoire . . . Even an ideal stock company could not be expected to give more than decent performances of *Hamlet*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Man and Superman*, *La Course du Flambeau*, *Hannele*, and *Francesca da Rimini* in a single week.

Even if nothing can be done now, and I do not admit that the case is so hopeless, when the Metropolitan Opera House is rebuilt why not have it stand for the best in operatic art? Why not an attempt at the perfect theatre? Why not two theatres under one roof? The smaller auditorium would serve for a more intimate exploitation of the smaller forms of operatic art; operas like *Manon* and *Cosi Fan Tutte*, *La Boheme* and *The Bartered Bride* would find their homes here. There are two such auditoriums in the famous theatre which Professor Max Littmann designed for Stuttgart. Let each stage be provided with all the modern appa-

ratus for lighting, all the mechanical appliances which make production easier, including, of course, the revolving stage, without which even the changes in the Wagner dramas are difficult to achieve. It seems to me it would be possible on occasion to add an apron to the stage, so that we might really be in touch with the prima donna again, receive her best from our midst, so to speak.

Once these mechanical adjuncts were provided the sailing would be easy, at least if the director of the theatre approved of the modern stage art, an art which at its best brings out the secrets of the drama, and softens the rough places. The decorations and lights should provide emphasis to the real drama and they should also serve to interest the eye when the invention of the playwright or that of the composer fails . . . All scenery for opera, at least almost all scenery for opera, certainly all Italian scenery (and a good deal of the French) since the days of Bibiena in the Seventeenth Century, has been a striving after the architectural . . . First, as Gordon Craig cleverly points out, scenery became imitation architecture; later it became imitation artificial architecture! For literally centuries this false tradition has been followed, degenerating the while. Our producers of opera know nothing of the distinction between

" presentation " and " representation," " unity of scene " and " unity of idea," " subjective " and " objective reproduction," " monodrama," " stylization," " conventionalism," " naturalism; " all the glittering phraseology of the modern artists of the theatre is to them as the argot of the automobile world to an aborigine fresh from Africa . . . Adolphe Appia and other modern artists, following Appia, have striven to make the actor the living emotional part of the setting; he should stand out. . . . Many of the settings at the Metropolitan Opera House have this fault, that they submerge the actor. For example neither Clarence Whitehill, who is a very big man, nor the explosively dramatic Mme. Ober could hope to achieve an existence on the stage in front of such sets as were provided for them in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The shrieking combination of purple, blue, and pink, in one of the scenes made it impossible to see or hear anything else. In like manner the setting for the King's hut in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* was so littered with assegai, javelins, and batique work that the actors and singers quite disappeared. Joseph Urban devised a very beautiful setting for this opera for the short-lived Cleveland Opera Company. The foreground was occupied with a flight of steps leading to a raised platform, guarded at either side

by a column. Behind this frame each picture was inserted . . . in each instance a back drop . . . The very bad rococo setting of the first act of *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Metropolitan Opera House is another case in point. Mme. Hempel's beautiful blue dressing gown faded into this setting, disappeared in it, and became less important than the many hundred painted roses with which it was embellished. Compare this setting with that of the second act of *Pierrot the Prodigal*, as produced by Winthrop Ames at the Booth Theatre, a pale mauve and lace concoction which furnished a perfect boudoir background for the gestures of the pantomimists. One could go on and on.

One of the worst faults of productions at the Metropolitan Opera House is the effect of unmeasured space that the stage usually presents. For certain scenes this is an advantage, but more often than not a good deal of the music and drama are lost in a desert. Even on a large stage it is possible to secure an effect of intimacy, whether by the setting or by the lighting. A skillful use of shadows would make us believe in Rodolfo's attic or in Marguerite's garden. Certain scenes are built out of all proportion for the drama they are supposed to frame. The setting for the second act of *Der Rosenkavalier*, for example, is excellent in itself,

but after the first five minutes of the act, the space is much too vast. It is likewise a mistake to have important characters dressed in white enact intimate drama against a white background. If I were asked to stage this scene I should provide a small reception room in the first plan of the stage, opening through an enormous arch, the full width of the stage, to the hallway behind. Once Sophie and Octavian were alone, the servitors would draw a green or black curtain across this opening, and for the ensuing scene the attention would be focused where it belongs instead of wandering aimlessly about a hall of ample size for a performance of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*. As a matter of fact, the present system of cluttering up the stage with a million details is all wrong even for a palace hall or a public square. A salient feature or two would suggest what is needed without usurping the attention. In the church scene of *Faust*, for example, a single column, lighted, while the rest of the scene remained in total obscurity, would emphasize the importance of Méphistophélès and Marguerite. "Stage settings," says Georg Fuchs, "are like families: the happiest are those of which we speak the least."

All over the world — even in America — great

stage directors have grown up in the theatre (although seldom in the opera house), working hand and hand with the playwright and the decorator to make everything that can be made of the material in hand . . . At Hellerau Jaques-Dalcroze, with the priceless assistance of Adolphe Appia, has, under special conditions, given performances of Gluck's *Orfeo* and other works; Stanislawsky's theatre in Moscow is the wonder of the age; in Petrograd Evereïnow and Meyerhold have done some remarkable things; in Berlin there is Reinhardt; in Buda-Pesth Hevesi . . . Is there a man in the world who understands the art of the stage more completely than Fokine, who devised the remarkable and highly original action of several of the best of the Russian Ballets? Nijinsky has done such things with *Till Eulenspiegel* as to suggest to any sensible man that he might perform similar wonders with *Die Meistersinger* and his production of *L'Aprés-midi d'un Faune* shows his versatility as a producer . . . Yes, there are capable stage directors, turn where you will you can find them. Look at what the Washington Square Players have done. Did you see Philip Moeller's production of *The Life of Man?* How great an effect he got with how small means! . . . There may be twenty young men in New York capable of improving con-

ditions at the Metropolitan Opera House . . . All that is required is a little daring ingenuity . . . A young man or two to suggest that Wagner be given with Appia's scenery and lighting directions (the love scene of *Tristan und Isolde* on a pitch dark stage, for instance); to introduce all the fragrant charm of the thirties into a performance of *La Sonnambula*, so that a modern interpreter of the rôle might be surrounded by all the physical advantages which enhanced the performance of Jenny Lind; to draw a veil of fine gauze over the scenes of *Pelléas et Mélisande* (this was done in Mrs. Campbell's production) so that Debussy's lyric drama might be still more vague and mystic; to read Meilhac and Halévy's book for *Carmen* before ordering the scenery for it so that the realistic acting of the heroine might find some logical support in the stage setting; to reveal the melodramatic intensity of *Trovatore*, the Viennese charm of *Der Rosenkavalier*, the fragrant bouquet of *Manon*, the exoticism of *Salome* and the horror of *Elektra*.

Or he might make curious experiments to break the stolid monotony of the present system, in which *Götterdämmerung*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Faust* are all painted and produced in precisely the same stupid manner. For example he might

imitate the Russians' production of Rimsky-Korsakow's *The Golden Cock*, given with two casts, one to sing and one to act; or he might follow the example of Veronese and other Venetian painters of Bible scenes and put all the characters of say *Faust* into modern clothes; or he might reverse the idea and dress all the characters of *Fedora* in Russian costumes of the time of Ivan the Terrible; he might present a whole opera against flat drops close to the footlights, after the manner of Meyerhold's production of the Maeterlinck plays; he might do this opera after the fashion of Aubrey Beardsley, that one in the style of Albrecht Dürer; or he might follow John Palmer's excellent advice to dress the opera "decently and inconspicuously." Heaven knows this would be a novelty. One of the first duties of this young man would be to put a ban on conventional, meaningless, routine gesture. But in whatever he would do he would display imagination . . . I shouldn't wonder, if some such experiment were made, that people of fashion who now make it a point to go to the opera, would be hard pressed to secure their seats, because their ranks would be swelled by people of brains and ideas, who might find a certain pleasurable excitement in making excursions into this new opera house.

Of course all these improvements would be easier of accomplishment if such a thing existed as American opera . . . The few experiments in this line cannot be considered as potent enough to encourage a new theory of stage art. If, however, a series of works in our language by our composers were to be produced each season the stimulus to American endeavour to make suitable productions for these works should be very great. The result would rise spontaneously out of the necessity. Vibrant and living music requires novelty of expression. At present we can but look towards the past or beyond the seas for our material, and so long as that is true it will be more difficult to give the American artist of the theatre his opportunity.

But why, in any case, take all this trouble, may be the managerial query, for a public that doesn't know any better, a public which has an instinctive distrust and dislike for any kind of innovation? Why educate this public up to a standard it doesn't expect and doesn't want, only to find that when it has acquired a taste for this high standard it will accept nothing else? Against this train of reasoning there is, of course, no argument. Only if directors do argue thus let us have no more talk of opera as an art. Let us speak simply of the business of opera giving and refer to managers and

performers as trades people. I'm afraid I'm one of the few who take the production of opera seriously. Isn't it silly of me?

November 29, 1916.

Notes on the *Armide* of Gluck

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RICHARD WAGNER, like many another great man, took what he wanted where he found it. Everyone has heard the story of his remark to his father-in-law when that august musician first listened to *Die Walküre:* "You will recognize this theme, Papa Liszt?" The *motiv* in question occurs when Sieglinde sings: *Kehrte der Vater nun heim.* Liszt had used the tune at the beginning of his *Faust* symphony. Not long ago, in playing over Schumann's *Kinderscenen,* I discovered Brünnhilde's magic slumber music, exactly as it appears in the music drama, in the piece pertinently called *Kind im Einschlummern.* The chorus which greets the arrival of Lohengrin, *Wie fasst uns selig süsses Grauen* sends the memory back to the tenor solo and chorus at the beginning of Mendelssohn's *Walpurgis Nacht,* while clear recollections of certain phrases in *Der Freischütz* are conjured up by a passage in the *Tannhäuser* march. When Weber's *Euryanthe* was revived recently at the Metropolitan Opera House it had the appearance of an old friend, although comparatively few in the first night audience had heard

the opera before. One recognized tunes, characters, scenes, because Wagner had found them all good enough to use in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin.* But, at least, you will object, he invented the music drama. That, I am inclined to believe, is just what he did not do, as any one may see for himself who will take the trouble to glance over the scores of the Chevalier Gluck and to read the preface to *Alceste.*

Gluck's reform of the opera was gradual; *Orphée* (in its French version), *Alceste,* and *Iphigénie en Aulide,* all of which antedate *Armide,* are replete with indications of what was to come; but *Armide,* it seems to me, is, in intention at least, almost the music drama, as we use the term to-day. The very nature of the characters and scenes confirms my amiable suspicion regarding Wagner.

What is the character of Armide herself but that of a wilful Kundry? Her father, Hidraot, is certainly the counterpart of Klingsor. Renaud, too, who will have none of her, we seem to have seen since as Parsifal. Ubalde and the Danish Knight will be familiar figures to any one who has attended a performance of *Lohengrin.* The scene of the Naiad certainly suggests the scene between Siegfried and the Rhine maidens in the third act of *Die Götterdämmerung* and the scene at the end of the

work, in which Armide sets fire to her palace and flies away on a hippograff, may have been in Wagner's mind when he penned the conclusion to the last *Ring* drama in which Brünnhilde on her horse mounts the funeral pyre of the hero while the Gibichs' palace is destroyed by flames. As if to give us the clue to the whole matter the overture begins with exactly the same theme, note for note, as that which opens the prelude of *Die Meistersinger*. More subtle evidence of Wagner's debt to Gluck is to be found in the conclusion of the final act, in which one theme, in recitative form, is dramatically extolled by voice and orchestra in a manner which foreshadows exactly the later love death of Isolde and Brünnhilde's self immolation. That Wagner was familiar with the Gluck scores is not in doubt. He made a concert ending for the overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* (because he was displeased with the one which Mozart had already made, as he signified with reasons in an article published in the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik," July 1, 1854; you may read it in the third volume of William Ashton Ellis's translation of Wagner's prose works), and somewhere in his writings he gives Gluck the credit for the invention of the *leit-motiv*. "With what poignant simplicity, with what truth has Gluck characterized by music the two elements of the con-

flict," he writes, concerning the overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide*. "In the beginning one recognizes in the marvellous vigour of the principal theme, with its weight of brass, a compact mass concentrated on a unique interest; then, in the theme which follows, the opposed and individual interest of the victim moves us to tenderness." (Indeed, in the article in the "Neue Zeitschrift" he indicates *four* themes in this overture, each of which he calls by a name.)

But it is for more essential reasons that one names Gluck the father of the music drama as we understand it to-day. In *Armide* he does away with recitative accompanied by the clavichord. The music of this work forms a continuous whole, made up, to be sure, of distinguishable pieces and melodies, separated by recitatives; but these recitatives, always accompanied by the orchestra, are the dramatic backbone of the drama. Nor is there repetition of words, a favourite device of opera composers of the period (and of periods to follow), who often repeated a phrase several times in order to effectively melodize over it. "I have tried," says Gluck himself, "to be more of a painter and poet in *Armide* than musician." More of a painter and poet than musician! Might not Wagner have said this? He was painter and poet and musician.

Wagner, as a matter of fact, wrote von Bülow: "One thing is certain: I am not a musician."

The preface to *Alceste* contains so adequate a statement of Gluck's intentions that I cannot do better than transcribe the meat of that admirable document here (the translation is that which appears in Grove's Dictionary):

"When I undertook to set the opera of *Alceste* to music, I resolved to avoid all those abuses which had crept into Italian opera through the mistaken vanity of singers and the unwise compliance of composers, and which had rendered it wearisome and ridiculous, instead of being, as it once was, the grandest and most imposing stage of modern times. I endeavoured to reduce music to its proper function, that of seconding poetry by enforcing the expression of the sentiment, and the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action, or weakening it by superfluous ornament. My idea was that the relation of music to poetry was much the same as that of harmonious colouring and well-disposed light and shade to an accurate drawing, which animates the figures without altering their outlines. I have therefore been very careful not to interrupt a singer in the heat of a dialogue in order to introduce a tedious ritornelle, nor to stop him in the middle of a piece either for the purpose

of displaying the flexibility of his voice on some favourable vowel, or that the orchestra might give him time to take breath before a long-sustained note.

"Furthermore, I have not thought it right to hurry through the second part of a song, if the words happened to be the most important of the whole, in order to repeat the first part regularly four times over; or to finish the air where the sense does not end in order to allow the singer to exhibit his power of varying the passage at pleasure. In fact my object was to put an end to abuses against which good taste and good sense have long protested in vain.

"My idea was that the overture ought to indicate the subject and prepare the spectators for the character of the piece they are about to see; that the instruments ought to be introduced in proportion to the degree of interest and passion in the words; and that it was necessary above all to avoid making too great a disparity between the recitative and the air of a dialogue, so as not to break the sense of a period or awkwardly interrupt the movement and animation of a scene. I also thought that my chief endeavour should be to attain a grand simplicity and consequently I have avoided making a parade of difficulties at the ex-

pense of clearness; I have set no value on novelty as such, unless it was naturally suggested by the situation and suited to the expression; in short there was no rule which I did not consider myself bound to sacrifice for the sake of effect."

Gluck had indeed determined to unite the arts of speech, painting, and music in the same work long before Wagner attempted to do so. He even went further (following, it is true, a custom of the period) and made the art of the dance an essential part of his scheme. Any adequate production of *Armide* or *Iphigénie en Aulide* cannot be made without taking this fact into account. The ballet requires as much attention as the orchestra or the singers. The ballet, in fact, in these music dramas and in *Orphée* is an integral part of the action. It may be said that the inadequate dancing in the production of *Armide* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York militated against the permanent success of the work there, in spite of Mme. Fremstad's remarkable performance of the title part and Mr. Caruso's lovely singing (the best he has done here) of the music of Renaud.

Armide served to open the New York opera season of 1910–11. The exact date of the performance (the first in America) was November 14, 1910. This reads like a simple enough statement unless

one remembers that *Armide* was produced at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris on September 23, 1777. In other words this opera, which by many is considered the masterpiece of its composer, had to wait for over a century and a quarter for a hearing on these shores. The year 1777 was history-making for the United States, but Marie Antoinette wrote a friend, shortly after the production of *Armide,* that no one in Paris was thinking any more about America. Everybody was discussing Gluck's new opera. Why was the New York production so belated? There were many reasons: the Gluck renaissance in Europe is of comparatively recent date. *Armide* has been performed recently in London; Paris has seen many revivals of it; several German cities and Brussels have produced it. A decade ago both Oscar Hammerstein and Heinrich Conried promised *Armide* to New York, but the promises were not kept. The Metropolitan production was made after Mr. Conried's death, by Giulio Gatti-Casazza and Arturo Toscanini.

H. T. Parker, in an article which appeared in the " Boston Transcript " in 1906, outlines a few of the reasons why an impresario might not face a production of *Armide* with equanimity:

" There are thirteen important parts in *Armide*

in the shortened version used in the recent European revivals. Except Armide herself not one is a star part; yet every one, if the opera is to keep its charm, must be sung with qualities of voice, artistry, imagination, and restraint that are rare among our generation of singers, major or minor. In Gluck's day two tenors in a single opera was a trifling demand for a composer to make. Outside Wagner it alarms the modern manager when both these tenors have considerable parts. Again *Armide* requires eight different settings — an Oriental palace, enchanted glades and gardens, the mouth of Hades, and sombre and fantastic nowheres. A flowery couch that bears Armide and her knight through the air and the enchantress's chariot, likewise for aerial journeys, are incidental pieces of machinery. Above all, in five of the eight scenes, a ballet appears, not for ornamental dances, or showy spectacle, but for intimate and delicate illustration of the situation and the music."

When the work was to be presented in Paris Gluck wrote his friend De Roullet that he would let the Opéra have it only on certain conditions, of which the principal ones were that he should have at least two months for preparatory study, that he could do what he pleased at rehearsals, and

that there should be no understudies: the parts should be sung by the first artists.

"Unless these conditions are acceded to," he wrote, "I shall keep *Armide* for my pleasure," and he terminated the letter with a supreme phrase: "I have written music which will never grow old."

The Académie Royale very sensibly let the composer have his way about rehearsals and singers and the work was produced there. It was revived in 1805, in 1811, and again in 1825. Later performances have been rare until within the last few years. F. A. Gevaert, the Director of the Conservatory of Brussels, who died in 1908, has been largely responsible for the renewed interest in this great composer. In his preface to *Armide* he relates an interesting incident in connection with the projected attempt to perform the opera in Paris in 1870. It seems that in 1858, when Meyerbeer was throned without a rival at the Paris Opéra, an event occurred which caused a sensation in the musical world — the publication in the "Revue Contemporaine" of a study of *Armide* signed by the name of one of the highest personages in France. It again became the fashion to praise the work of Gluck. The act of Hate was played and sung at one of the concerts of the Société des Concerts, and the piece itself was inscribed in the list of lyric

dramas to be performed at the Opéra. However, as often happens in such matters, the director did not keep his promise in spite of the example of the enormous success of the revival of *Orphée* at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1859 when Mme. Pauline Viardot sang the title part.

Finally Emile Perrin, who became director of the Opéra in 1862, took the matter to heart. In 1866 he asked Gevaert to become general director of music in the theatre. Knowing Gevaert to be a fervent admirer of Gluck, for he had studied the five French works of the composer since his youth, Perrin often asked him to play the score of *Armide* on the piano. In 1868 Perrin decided to prepare the work for production during the winter of 1870–71. He went to the most extraordinary pains about the scenery, costumes, and machinery, and he sent to St. Petersburg for a ballet master. He entrusted the principal rôles to the first artists of the Opéra whose répertoire at this period embraced works by Halévy, Meyerbeer, and Rossini. He allotted Armide to Mme. Sasse; Hate to Mme. Gueymard; Renaud to Villaret; and Hidraot to Devoyod. The fourth act, however, in which none of the principal characters of the piece appears, he did not cast at once. He recognized this act as the most dangerous point in his enterprise.

"To present to the public toward the end of the evening an entire act sung by secondary artists is to run a chance of failure," he said. "On the other hand to cut three-quarters of the act, as one has done at many of the revivals of *Armide* is to discredit in advance the work which one has pretended to honour. Well, I will have this act, which is a veritable musical intermezzo, sung by the stars of the troupe, by the artists who actually have the highest standing with the public. Faure will sing Ubalde, Miss Nilsson will sing Lucinde (both of whom were at that moment having the greatest success in *Hamlet*), Mme. Carvalho (who created the part of Marguerite in *Faust*) will take the part of Mélisse, and Colin (a young tenor who had just sung the part of Raoul in *Les Huguenots* with success) will play the part of the Danish Knight. As this act may be detached from the rest of the piece we will rehearse it separately."

This splendid idea of Perrin's, however, was never to be carried out. Ten days before the date set for the opening performance war was declared between France and Germany and *Armide* was sent to the storehouse. It was not until 1905 (twenty-five years later!) that the music drama finally appeared on the *affiches* of the Opéra when Mme. Bréval enacted the title part; Mr. Delmas sang

Hidraot; Mr. Affre, Renaud; Mlle. Alice Verlet, a Naiad; Mlle Féart, Hate; Mr. Gilly, Ubalde (the part which he sang in New York); and Mr. Scaramberg the Danish Knight. Since then *Armide* has never been long absent from the répertoire of the Opéra. I have heard Mme. Litvinne there in the title part, and Mmes. Borgo and Chenal have also appeared in it. It was after the 1905 performance that Jean Marnold launched his attack on this "œuvre bâtarde,— ballet-héroïco-dramatico-féerique."

Quinault wrote the tragedy of *Armide* after an episode to be found in Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered." Quinault's book was originally set by Lulli and first represented in Paris in 1686. It was revived in 1703, 1713, 1724, 1746, 1761, and 1764. Gluck's first work for the Paris Opéra was *Iphigénie en Aulide*. Later he arranged *Alceste* and *Orphée* for presentation at that theatre and wrote some smaller pieces for performance at Versailles to please Marie Antoinette. In composing *Armide* Gluck followed the original book with slight alterations, in spite of the fact that, as Gevaert says, the poetic form of the text, excellent for the recitative in vogue in Lulli's time, lends itself as little as possible to purely musical voice writing, on account of the mélange of different metres and the

irregular return of the rhyme. Gluck might easily have altered the verses and omitted some of the prolixities of the plot, as had been done when Lulli's opera was revived, but he did not seem to wish to, counting on the resources of his art to sustain the attention of the auditor in the moments when the action slackened, or indeed, ceased altogether. The lack of symmetry in the verses of Quinault the composer found altogether to his liking and proposed to draw from it some entirely new effects. In consequence he resolved to set the poem of 1686 from the first to the last verse, with the exception of the prologue, to music. The only modification that he permitted himself was an original termination to the terrible scene of the third act, which ends, in Quinault's play, with Hate returning to her cavern, after having abandoned *Armide* to her fate, with four added verses:

O ciel! quelle horrible menace!
Je frémis, tout mon sang se glace!
Amour! Puissant Amour! viens calmer mon effroie,
Et prends pitié d'un coeur qui s'abandonne à toi!

In order to appreciate the superiority of Gluck's work to Lulli's it is only necessary to compare the two settings of Armide's arioso, *Enfin, il est en ma puissance.* Twenty years before Gluck com-

posed *Armide* J. J. Rousseau had written an article about the ridiculous weakness of Lulli's setting of these words, the unsuitability of the musical treatment.

All the later works of Gluck were enriched by many numbers which had done service in operas he had written in earlier days, which were quickly forgotten then, and have been entirely forgotten to-day, except by the compilers of musical biographies and the makers of thematic catalogues. Wotquenne, in his thematic catalogue of the works of Gluck, indicates what melodies in *Armide* are second-hand, so to speak. The overture, it seems, was originally employed for *Telemacco* (1765) and was again used before *Feste d'Apollo* (1769). The Dance of the Furies and the Sicilienne had previously done duty in the ballet *Don Juan.* The other numbers which have been used before have been very much modified in their new positions. It may be noted that the entire scene of Hate is little more than a mosaic of various themes from earlier operas of Gluck. Armide's appeal to Love at the end of the third act is accompanied by a rhythm in the second violins which closely resembles a passage in *Paride ed Elena.* Julien Tiersot has an ingenious theory to account for these self-borrowings:

"Certain scenes in *Armide* belonged to the order of ideas which in other times had already interested Gluck. In his youth he had depicted musically many scenes of invocation and evocation. Certain figures, certain rhythms, certain sonorities, had imposed themselves upon him in this connection and he had already made use of them in many of his operas. He found himself thus on familiar ground when he had to put to music the duet by which Armide and Hidraot evoke the spirits, and all the scene with Hate."

I can never glance into the score of this remarkable work, or hear it performed, however indifferently, without feeling a very sincere emotion. The melodies of Gluck's immediate successors charm one; Mozart more than charms, for he succeeded in painting the characteristics of his personages in tone, but even in Mozart's most dramatic score there lies no such clear indication of the way of the modern music drama as may be found in *Armide* on almost every page. I do not dwell on the overture, for that to me is but a futile preparation for the drama for which, after all, it was not written. But from the rise of the first curtain I can only follow the progress of the work with increasing admiration. The pride and despair expressed in Armide's opening scene are vastly more successful

than the overture in evoking the proper atmosphere, but it is with the entrance and sudden death of Aronte, after his short announcement, that the real drama begins, and it is with Armide's exclamation, *O ciel! c'est Renaud!* that music drama becomes an established fact and not a theory. The finale of the first act is a whirlwind and should be treated as such in performance. The second act is one of violent contrasts: pastoral scenes alternate with stormy invocations. So, by means of his magical background, Gluck emphasizes the contrasts in his heroine's nature, in which love of Renaud is struggling with her hatred of him as the enemy of her country. Love conquers and in Armide's appeal to the spirits of the air to bear her and her lover away one may find as noble a piece of music, as beautiful an idea completely realized, as Wagner's conception of Wotan's appeal to Loge at the close of *Die Walküre*. The third act begins with the most familiar air of the piece, *Ah! si la liberté* — Armide's soliloquy before her appeal to Hate to rescue her from the bonds of love. The ensuing scenes are replete with dramatic expressiveness and I do not know of a scene more moving, in its effective and beautiful simplicity, in the whole range of music drama (nor am I forgetting the poignancy of several episodes in the lyric dramas

of Moussorgsky, arrived at, by the way, by similar means) than the appeal to Love with which the act closes. The fourth act is an interlude, filled with charming music, to be sure. And in the fifth act, in the duet between Armide and Renaud, and more especially in the dramatic recitative with which the work ends, may be found the seed from which grew the great trees of the nineteenth century.

October 22,1915.

Erik Satie

"Modern music has produced nothing to replace Beethoven and Wagner. Neither has modern literature supplanted Shakespeare. I really cannot guess why it should."

Edwin Evans.

Erik Satie

PAUL VERLAINE'S "Sagesse" appeared in 1881 (but it was not until 1893 that Edmond Gosse tracked the dissipated poet to the basement of the Café Soleil d'Or in the Boul' Mich'!); the Sâr Péladan published "Le Vice Suprême" in 1884; in the same year Joris K. Huysmans issued "A Rebours"; "Les Complaintes" of Jules Laforgue dates from 1885; "Les Illuminations" of Arthur Rimbaud appeared in 1886; so did George Moore's "Confessions of a Young Man"; the "Poésies Complètes" of Stéphane Mallarmé are dated 1887. . . . Degas, Monet, Renoir, Manet . . . were all painting in the Eighteen Eighties . . . Augusta Holmès was presiding over her celebrated salon at which Catulle Mendès, "with his pale hair, and his fragile face illuminated with the idealism of a depraved woman," was an outstanding figure. Were not "Méphistophéla" and "Le Roi Vierge" romances of this epoch? . . . Symbolism, mysticism, *vers libre*, impressionism, decadence, were in the Parisian air. Painters and writers alike were indulging in strange acrobatics — absinthe on the high wire. Only the musicians stuck to the earth, refusing to be lured to the giddy new trapezes. Massenet and

Saint-Saëns were the popular French composers . . . Gounod, Bizet . . . César Franck, believer and mystic, belonged to the epoch to be sure (in the Eighties he wrote his best piano music and the *Symphony in D Minor*) and pointed toward the future, a future amply fulfilled in the work of Vincent d'Indy and other disciples of the organist of Sainte-Clotilde. . . . There was another voice, a wee small voice it seemed then, even to its possessor, especially to its possessor. Erik Satie did not consider himself an innovator, and at the time his music was swept into the maëlstrom of unheard things, but in 1886 he had written his *Ogives*, in 1887 his *Sarabandes*, in 1888 his *Gymnopédies*, and in 1890 his *Gnossiennes* (which appeared the same year with the "Axël" of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam) . . . He passed unnoticed, however, save for his own circle, until twenty-five years later . . . and then it was recalled that Claude-Achille Debussy had very modestly stepped futureward in 1893 with *La Damoiselle Elue.*

A strange figure, Erik Satie, a shy and genial fantasist, who has been writing strange music with strange titles in Paris for thirty years, music which has only recently been published in any quantity or any buyable form (Roland-Manuel writes that a clerk in the largest Paris music shop told him in

1909 that Satie had written "some waltzes and two cake-walks" and an old lady assured him that Satie was the proprietor of a bathing establishment on the Avenue Trudaine!), music which is even yet to be heard in most of the great concert halls of the world. . . . Beginning with the classic form of the sarabande, Satie, whose talent is a curiously blended result of those literary and artistic impulses which, at first, had so little effect on the art of other composers, has written a mass for the poor, trumpet calls for the Rose-Croix, ditties for a music hall divinity, preludes for plays by Jules Bois and the Sâr Péladan, and dances for the Russian Ballet and Valentine de Saint-Point. He has celebrated the desiccation of sea-urchins and he has written a fugue in "the form of a pear." . . . Over music as simple in its melodic line, and as French, as that of Massenet he has inscribed the most astounding titles and the most terrifying directions to the performer. . . . In one instance he has asked the pianist to play "*sur du velours jaunie, sec comme un coucou, leger comme un oeuf*"; in another he directs "like a nightingale with a toothache." . . . He has been heard to remark, "*Il faut être rigolo!*" . . . Incorrigible Satie . . . Scotch and French, product of Honfleur, a village organist's teachings, Montmartre,

the Conservatoire, and the Schola Cantorum; played on by impressionism, Catholicism, Rosecrucianism, Pre-Raphaelitism, the science of black magic, theosophy, the theory of androgyny, the *camaraderie* of the cabaret . . . part-child, part-devil, part-faun . . . all intelligence (you may get the picture from his portrait painted by Antoine de la Rouchefoucauld), there is no other such figure in modern music; there is no other such figure in all the annals of music. . . . The editor of Lombroso might issue a new edition of "The Man of Genius" to include Satie; Gérard de Nerval would die of envy were he alive; Jules Laforgue would feel that his "Moralités Légendaires" had not been written in vain; and Max Nordau might chortle, "I told you so." . . . Yet the bearded and be-spectacled countenance, the *tête de blagueur* of Erik Satie is rarely seen on the Paris boulevards, and his name is seldom celebrated with that of his contemporaries. Only in queer corners of articles about modern French composers you will find it, usually without pregnant comment. . . . At least three literary portraits exist in French, however. Jean Ecorcheville, Roland-Manuel, and G. Jean-Aubry have all written about him with sympathy, and his name is often on the lips of Debussy and Ravel. Both of them have orches-

trated works of Satie (why does not Mr. Damrosch include Debussy's orchestral version of the first and third *Gymnopédies* in one of his programmes?) and every Saturday, I am told, he visits the composer of *L'Aprés-midi d'un Faune* in perpetuation of a friendship which has existed since the two met in the late Eighties when Satie held forth at the piano of the Auberge du Clou, Avenue Trudaine. . . .

Eric-Alfred Leslie Satie (he doubtless owes this remarkable series of names to a Scotch mother) was born at Honfleur (where the aunt in the play comes from) May 17, 1866 (G. Jean-Aubry gives this date incorrectly as 1855). On his published music he has changed the c in his first Christian name to a k and dropped the Alfred Leslie. One of his childhood friends was Alphonse Allais, doubtless an early instigator of that subtle buffoonery which later became a notable characteristic with Satie. His first music teacher was the organist (Vinot, a pupil of Niedermeyer) of the church of Sainte-Catherine in the village of Honfleur and it was just here in the beginning, perhaps, that he became imbued with that Gregorian spirit which permeates a good deal of his music. . . . At the age of eight his musical education is said to have begun, but neither then nor later did he

manifest signs of precocity or aptitude. There is something of a similarity to be observed in the case of Moussorgsky; neither of these musicians ever learned to handle the old technique of their art freely and yet (perhaps I should say, and so) both succeeded in expressing themselves. . . . At the age of twelve Satie left Honfleur for Paris, where his first teacher was Guilmant. At the Paris Conservatoire, which he entered in 1879, Satie was indolent and there is a legend that he was dropped from one piano class on the ground of sheer incompetence. His teachers of harmony assured him that his métier was the piano; his piano professors advised him to stick to composition; and Mathias, the Hungarian, a pupil of Chopin, in despair one day counselled Satie to study the violin! Decidedly this young man was not considered musical at the Conservatoire. In the classes of Mathias he was a co-pupil with Chevillard, Paul Dukas, and Philipp, but there is no evidence that he ever acquired any great efficiency in the art of piano playing; rather the contrary. . . . Next we find him in the cabarets of Montmartre (one writer speaks of the Chat Noir where he must have been a contemporary of Yvette Guilbert unless she was singing at the Divan Japonais at this epoch) and playing at the Auberge du Clou

which remains to this day a popular eating place for artists, and it was here, according to Jean-Aubry, that he met Claude-Achille Debussy, who might have heard him play his *Ogives* (1886) and the now famous *Sarabandes* (1887), of which there are three, "*les deux manches et la belle.*" The mystic harmonies in these strange piano pieces spell (and ante-date) much of the mysterious wonder in Debussy's later work. Was this the Gregorian inspiration? Satie did not know that he was revolutionary; he did not want to be; he did not expect to be. He wrote his round clear notes on white sheets of paper. He did not ask anybody to play his music; he made no effort to get it published, and so he remained obscure. (There is an analogy in the case of Henri Rousseau, the painter, who, I am told, wanted "to paint like Bouguereau." He strove to be academic. Fortunately he never succeeded.)

About this time Satie encountered the Sâr Péladan and the second cycle of his career began. One of the phenomena of the early Nineties in Paris was the foundation of a mystical sect, half artistic, half theosophic, called the Salon de la Rose-Croix. A youth with an ascetic, Assyrian face, a mop of black hair, a wealth of black beard, and piercing, penetrating eyes, the eyes of Maurice Renaud as

Athanaël in *Thais*, Josephin Aimé Péladan, was the founder. He was the son of a writer and mystic, Adrien Péladan, and was born at Lyons in 1858. He began as a fervent disciple of Barbey d'Aurevilly, by writing romances; later he travelled in Italy and went to Bayreuth and wrote about Leonardo da Vinci and Richard Wagner; then he proclaimed himself Sâr, became a magician, wore long flowing robes, founded the Salon of the Rose-Croix (1892–1898), gave æsthetic soirées, at which esoteric dramas of his own devising were performed, and generally held the attention by his eccentricities. His books, written in a blatant metaphoric style, were a strange mixture of the dreams of a magician, the faith of an obstinate Catholic, a hallucinatory idealism, glorification of the flesh, and erotic sensualism. His knowledge of music, of painting, of the life of the Greeks, of all the subjects he touched upon (and they were many), was seemingly a little confused; his philosophy was neither scientific nor literary. The novelists thought of him as a mystic and a man of ideas; to the mystics he remained a novelist; to the public at large he loomed as another of those eccentric figures which always amuse the Paris crowd. His principal work is the series of novels called by him "Ethopées," which appeared under the general

title of "Decadence Latine." It includes "Le Vice Suprême" (1884), "Curieuse" (1885), "L'Initiation Sentimentale" (1886), "A Coeur Perdu" (1887), "Istar" (1888), "La Victoire du Mari" (1889), "Coeur en Peine" (1890), "Androgyne" (1891), "Le Panthée" (1893), "Typhonia" (1893), "Le Dernier Bourbon" (1895), "La Lamentation d'Ilou" (1896), "La Vertu Suprême" (1896), and "Finis Latinorum" (1899). Some of his other books are "Comment On Devient Mage" (1892; let us hope he did not advocate the method of Bouvard and Pécuchet), "Comment On Devient Fée" (1893), "L'Art Idéaliste et Mystique" (1894). Recently he has published his book on the war, "L'Allemagne devant l'Humanité" (1916). His plays include *Le Fils des Etoiles* (1895), *Promethée, Sémiramis* (1897), *Oedipe et le Sphinx* (1898), and *Le Mystère du Grail.* It is interesting to read the letters in which the directors of the Odéon (Porel) and the Comédie Française (Jules Claretie) refused his play, *Le Prince de Byzance.* They are published in the volume with the play. *Le Fils des Etoiles* was also refused at both these theatres. His play, *St. Francis of Assisi,* was translated into English "and adapted" by Harold John Massingham. . . . Péladan gave a performance in Paris

(March 17, 1892) of Palestrina's Pope Marcellus Mass. . . . Gustave Moreau was interested in his salons and I believe that Odilon Redon exposed pictures there. . . . Among the other painters in the Rose-Croix movement Jean Delville, Alphonse Osbert, Carlos Séon, Egusquiza, Aman Jean, Fernan Khopff, and Armand Point may be mentioned. A feature of the salon of 1893 was the portrait of Péladan by Marcellin Desboutins. . . . Was Albert Samain one of the poets of the movement? Certainly Erik Satie composed music for two of the Sâr's plays (this fact is not mentioned in the books of the plays; of so little importance was the name of Satie at the time), *Le Fils des Etoiles* and *Le Prince de Byzance*, and he wrote trumpet calls, emulating the fashion of Bayreuth, for the Salon of the Rose-Croix. Roland-Manuel professes to discover a revolt against Wagnerism in this music; personally I do not believe that Satie was making any such conscious attempt. Ravel orchestrated the prelude for *Le Fils des Etoiles*, the "*Wagnérie kaldéenne*" of the Sâr Péladan (performed at Durand-Ruel's in February, 1892).

About this time Satie composed the music for a ballet, *Uspud*, which brought about a rupture with the direction of the Opéra. He is said to have proposed a duel and to have been refused! An-

other incredibly out of character episode of this period was his attempt to become a member of the Institut upon the death of Ernest Guiraud (it was Guiraud to whom fell the honour of completing *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, left unfinished at Offenbach's death) in 1892. Gustave Moreau is said to have been the only member of the august body in favour of admitting him.

A long silence ensued. Satie was forgotten seemingly. . . He felt the need of technical fortification and he immured himself in the Schola Cantorum, from which institution he emerged with pastorals, chorals, and fugues, in the best d'Indy forms, if not quite in the d'Indy manner! . . . The real emergence of Satie occurred on January 16, 1911 when Ravel played three of his compositions, including one of the *Sarabandes* at a concert of the Societé Musicale Independente. . . . This baffling figure was now dragged into the auditorium, and to the music publishers, and a series of remarkable piano works has resulted. . . . At present Erik Satie lives at Arcueil near the fortifications of Paris.

The list of Satie's work is long and interesting. A few of the pieces mentioned, however, have not as yet been published. Of others the manuscript has disappeared. Here is the list, which I think

is nearly complete: *Valse-Ballet* (1885), which appeared in the "Musique des Familles"; *Les Anges, Sylvie,* and *Les Fleurs* (1885; songs, all of which are lost); *Ogives* (1886); *Trois Sarabandes* (1887); *Trois Gymnopédies* (1888); *Trois Gnossiennes* (1890); three preludes for *Le Fils des Etoiles* (1891); *L'Hymne au Drapeau* for *Le Prince de Byzance* (1891); prelude for *Le Nazaréen* of Henri Mazel (1892); *Les Sonneries de la Rose-Croix* (1892); *Uspud,* "Christian ballet for one dancer" (1892), respectfully submitted by me to Waslav Nijinsky as a suggestion (published by La Librarie de l'Art Independant); prelude for a play by Jules Bois, *La Porte Héroïque du Ciel* (1893; orchestrated by Roland-Manuel); *Danses Gothiques, neuvaines pour le plus grand calme et la forte tranquillité de mon âme, mise sous l'invocation de Saint-Benoit* (1893; the extracts from these dances published in "S. I. M." are incorrectly printed); *La Messe des Pauvres* (1895); in 1896 Satie made some sketches for an English pantomime, *Jack in the Box,* in collaboration with Jules Dépaquit (mss. lost); *Pièces Froides* (*Airs à faire fuir* and *Danses de travers* [dedicated to Mme. J. Ecorcheville] 1897); *Le Picadilly,* for piano, and arranged for small orchestra (out of print); *Je te veux,* waltz for

piano; also arranged as a song and for small orchestra (1897); *Poudre d'or,* waltz (1897); *Tendrement, valse chantée!!!* (1897); *La Diva de l'Empire,* song (1900); Ecorcheville mentions some sketches for a *Poisson Rèveur* (1900); *Trois morceaux en forme de poire, avec une manière de commencement, une prolongation du même et un en plus, suivi d'une redite,* piano, four hands (1903; orchestrated by Roland-Manuel); *Pousse l'Amour,* music for a play by M. de Féraudy (1905); *En habit de cheval; pièces en forme de fugue* (*choral-fugue litanique — autre choral-fugue de papier*), piano, four hands (1911); and *Aperçus Désagréables* (Pastorale, Choral, and Fugue), piano, four hands (1911).

Since 1912 he has written: *Véritables préludes flasques* (*pour un chien*) (1912); *Les pantins dansent,* for Valentine de Saint-Point (1912); *Descriptions automatiques* (April 1913); *Embryons desséchés* (June 1913); *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois* (July 1913); *Chapitres tournés en tous sens* (August 1913); *Vieux sequins, vieilles cuirasses* (1913); *Pièces enfantines* (1913); *La piège de Méduse,* dances for a comedy of the composer (1913); *Choses vues à droite et à gauche,* for piano and violin (1913); *Les heures séculaires et instantanées* (1914); *Trois valses distinguées*

du precieux dégoûté (1914); *Trois poëmes d'amour*, words by the composer (1914); *Jeux et divertissements* (1914); *Avant-dernières pensées* (1915); *and Daphénéo*, *Le Chapelier*, and *La Statue de bronze*, songs (1916).

Edgard Varèse had arranged the music for an extraordinary performance of Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Cirque-Nouveau in Paris, a performance which had to be abandoned. He had chosen music by Florent-Schmitt, Varèse, Debussy, Strawinsky, Roussel, and Ravel. Oberon was to have made his august entrance to the strains of *Tipperary*, and Satie contributed *Cinq Grimaces* for the occasion.

Before the war began Jean Cocteau, Paulet Thevenaz, and Strawinsky were planning a work called *Parade* for the Russian Ballet. It did not progress beyond the idea. Later Cocteau transferred his attention to Satie and Picasso. *Parade* was produced by the Russians in Paris May 18, 1917. The other novelties in this short season at the Châtelet were *Contes Russes* (*Kikimora*, *Bovo Karolewitch*, *Baba Yaga*, and *Epilogue et Danses Russes*): music by Liadow, choregraphy by Miassine, settings and costumes by Larionow; *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur*, adapted from a comedy of Goldoni; music by Scarlatti, orchestrated by Tom-

masini; choregraphy by Miassine; scenery and costumes by Leon Bakst (the setting was arranged as though it were seen through a crystal globe, deforming the lines of perspective); and *Las Meninas*, danced to a *Pavane* of Gabriel Fauré; setting by Carl Socrate; costumes by Jose-Maria Sert (who, it will be remembered, designed the setting for *The Legend of Joseph*); choregraphy by Miassine, who was also responsible for the choregraphy of *Parade*. Nijinsky did not dance in this Paris season. The principal interpreters of the troupe were Mmes. Tchernicheva and Lopoukowa, and Leonide Miassine. . . . At the first performance in Paris *Parade* was given with *Les Sylphides*, *Petrouchka*, and *Soleil de Nuit*.

Here is Jean Cocteau's scenario as it was printed in the programmes: "The scene represents the houses of Paris on a Sunday. Street Theatre. Three music hall numbers serve as the free show. Chinese magician. American girl. Acrobats. Three managers organize the publicity. They explain in their terrible language that the crowd takes the free show for the spectacle inside and they try to make the people understand their error. Nobody is convinced. After the final number supreme effort of the managers. The Chinaman, the acrobats, and the girl come out of the empty

theatre. Seeing the failure of the managers they try for the last time their own charms but it is too late."

Picasso's costumes did not please the critics. That does not mean that they were not good. Of course, however, Charles Demuth is the man chosen by God to make the designs for this symbolic ballet. As for Satie's music that too seems to have caused a disturbance similar to that provoked by the production of *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, although perhaps not so serious. The critics did not like this music. From Pierre Lalo's article in "Le Temps" I gathered that Satie had introduced a new instrument into the modern orchestra, the typewriter! ! ! !

Here is what Henri Quittard had to say in "Le Figaro": "La musique de M. Erik Satie ne mérite pas moins de louanges (this after a paragraph devoted to the demolishment of Picasso). Ce compositeur a reçu du ciel la grace singulière de conserver toute sa vie l'heureuse facilité des personnes trés jeunes à prendre le plus vif plaisir aux blagues d'atelier et aux grosses charges des plus innocentes. Il s'est donc diverti, avec une fantaisie tant soit peu laborieuse, à reproduire les effets burlesques qu'une douzaine de musiciens de foire produisent sans effort et même sans y penser

le moins du monde. Il lui a fallu, pour un résultat si plaisant, beaucoup de travail et un nombreux orchestre d'excellents artistes. Mais il a fort bien réussi. Et je ne doute pas qu'il n'ait pris un grand divertissement à si belle besogne."

It is interesting to observe that both Strawinsky and Satie are very much interested in clowns nowadays, as impersonal mediums for the expression of the comic spirit. . . . At present this composer is working on a string quartet and a *Scène Lyrique* after the Dialogues of Plato. Satie also dreams of writing "furniture music" for the different rooms of a house and the different occurrences of life.

You will find the name of Satie furtively poking its head out of odd manuscripts yet to be published, touched on in the writings of James Huneker and Philip Hale, and mentioned in obscure corners of newspaper feuilletons about French music (René Lenormand, in "L'Harmonie Moderne," gives Satie the credit of having initiated the French renaissance in music), but his delicate melodies are seldom performed in public (however, Riccardo Vinès has given many auditions of his works in Paris); their structure is too ethereal, too gauze-like, too butterfly-winged, too *gauche*, too angular, at once too refined and too barbaric to meet the

tympanum of the public ear. It *is* vague music, but has not vagueness become the slogan of a school since Satie began to write? Musicians know, and some of them love, this music, and its relation to the work of the more publicly recognized Debussy is too apparent to call for extended comment. There is more than a casual use of the whole-tone scale to recommend this comparison to the critical ear; there is a fragile melodic line, and there are sonorous harmonies, formed without regard for tradition, to be played diminuendo. Satie's very limitations have added to his artistic stature. Like Moussorgsky, if he had been more of an expert with the *cliché* and technique of his art he might not have developed his own personality so successfully, might not have expressed himself so sincerely, with so much originality. . . . From the beginning he imagined strange procedures. For instance he hit, almost at once, on the plan of publishing his music without bar lines. (Satie here, of course, remembered the old religious composers. The tyranny of the bar line in music dates back no farther than the Seventeenth Century. . . . It is interesting to observe that Stéphane Mallarmé in many of his poems ignored punctuation; a modern English poet, Mina Loy, has followed his example.) There are no separations. Nothing is dichoto-

mized. . . . The music runs along. . . . It is not difficult to play, however, as Satie has the habit of employing few accidentals and almost all the notes in many of his compositions are of the same, or a related, value. Appogiatura, syncopation, bravura, he is not friendly with. The pieces are written in facile keys for pianists. They are sometimes difficult for the ear and brain, never for the fingers. . . . "Their particular colour," writes Jean Ecorcheville, "is made up of harmonic blemishes, subtly combined, sonoroties juxtaposed without regard for the permitted cadences or the required resolutions." . . . He has written tunes for Paulette Darty, *divette de music-hall*, to sing. . . . Fancy, even a song called *Tendrement* . . . and the music-hall, the cabaret atmosphere enter, strangely disguised, even into the *Gymnopédies* (did these dances for nude Spartan babies, inspired by the "Salammbô" of Flaubert, in turn inspire Isadora Duncan?). This is a part of his joke, for he is very *gamin*, this composer, and he loves the *rigolo*. Certainly the first *Sarabande* bears a strong resemblance to the prelude to *Tristan*. . . . In *La Tyrolienne turque*, *Españaña*, *Celle qui parle trop*, and *Sur un vaisseau* you may find other adroit and ridiculous quotations. . . . In one instance he has transposed the trio of

Chopin's *Funeral March* to C major and written under it that it is a citation from the celebrated mazurka of Schubert. There are jocular references to Puccini and Chabrier. . . . Then there is the mystical side of his nature . . . the Gothic side, revealed in his *Gothic Dances* and his *Pointed Arches*, with their angular lines. His pale frail *Gnossiennes* (Gnosse was a town in ancient Crete), the second of which is a veritable masterpiece of definite indecision (like a miniature picture in tone of Flaubert's " L'Education Sentimentale "), were partly the result of the Javanese dances at the Paris Exposition in 1889 and partly of the Greek chorus of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre (Satie, I am told, spends long hours in the churches, listening to the organ and the chanting of the priests). Timorous, meticulous, mincing, neat, petulant, petty, are some of the adjectives one might apply to this music, and yet none of them exactly describes its effect, half-spiritual, half-mocking! Is there any other music like it? Baudelaire once wrote: " Have you observed that a bit of sky seen through an air-hole, or between two chimneys, two rocks, or through an arcade, gives a more profound idea of the infinite than the grand panorama seen from the top of a mountain? "

There are three periods to be observed in the

style of Satie. First the period of the *Sarabandes* and the *Gymnopédies* (by no means the usual immature output of a composer's nonage); next the period in which he applied himself to find fantastic expression for the vagaries of the Salon de la Rose-Croix; finally the period in which he appeared before his little world bearing before him his *printed* music, garnished with the most extravagant titles. . . . From these titles and from his directions to performers one might derive the idea that Satie is a purveyor of programme music. Nothing could be further from the truth. . . . His titles and his directions, apparently, often have nothing whatever to do with the music they are supposed to describe. True ironist that he is he conceals his diffidence under these fantastic titles. He ridicules his own emotion at just the point at which the auditor is about to discover it. He also protects himself against the pedants and the philistines by raising these barriers. Is not this a form of snobbery? "*Il est de toute évidence*," Satie is quoted as saying to Roland-Manuel, "*que les Aplatis, les Insignifiants, et les Boursouflés n'y prendront aucun plaisir. Qu'ils avalent leurs barbes. Qu'ils se dansent sur le ventre.*" . . . Under a melancholy tune he has posed these words: "This is the hunt after a lobster. The hunters

descend to the bottom of the water. They run. The sound of the horn is heard at the bottom of the seas. The lobster is tracked. The lobster weeps." . . . In his remarkable theatre in Petrograd Evereïnow has given performances of Bernard Shaw's *Candida* at which a little negro page-boy read all the stage directions as they occurred in the text. It was this Russian producer's idea that the author's comments were the best part of the play and he was determined that his audiences should share them. A performer of Satie's later music should resort to some similar expedient, if he wishes his audience in on the whole fun. If Vladimir de Pachmann were the pianist, he might not only play and read Satie's directions but add others of his own as well. Fancy de Pachmann playing the delicate *Airs to make you run* from the *Cold Pieces*, saying at intervals, softly to his auditors. . . . *En y regardant à deux foix* . . . *Se le dire.* . . . *A plat* . . . *Blanc* . . . *Toujours.* . . . *Passer* . . . *Pareillement.* . . . *Du coin de la main* (how Pachmann would love to say that!) . . . *Seul.* . . . *Etre visible un moment.* . . . *Se raccorder* . . . *Un peu cuit* . . . *Encore* . . . *Mieux* . . . *Encore.* . . . *Très bien.* . . . *Merveilleusement.* . . . *Parfait* . . . *N'Allez pas plus haut.* . . . *Sans bruit* . . . and *Très loin.* . . . In the lan-

tern number of *Descriptions automatiques* the player is told to keep from lighting the lantern, next to light it, to extinguish it, and finally to put his hands in his pockets . . . all of this, so far as one can make out with the aid of the naked ear, without any perceptible relation to the music which is, as one biographer points out, mostly in two voices!

The importance of Satie lies in the fact that he, without knowing it, even without others knowing it, was really the founder of the French impressionistic school. He liberated French music from the tyranny of the major-minor. This is realized by the impressionists themselves to-day, thirty years too late perhaps, but they are endeavouring to make amends. Erik Satie began the attack, unwittingly, which led to the present victory. . . . The new art was born of irresolution, a circumstance, as Ecorcheville says, which finds an analogy at the close of the Sixteenth Century. . . . The artist finds pleasure in fugitive dissonances, which the academicians describe as licentious, but a new movement results. . . . Ecorcheville, with a bit of a smile, compares Satie to Monteverde. . . . His effect on his successors, possibly, has been just as important. And while the pedants may refuse to take him seriously and the great public

does not even know his name, future historians must reserve a few pages for this esoteric figure. . . . *Fumiste — peut-être — mais il a fait quelque chose.*

November 16, 1916.

The Great American Composer

"nothing popular should be held beneath the attention of thoughtful people —"

H. R. Haweis.

The Great American Composer

WHEN some curious critic, a hundred years hence, searches through the available archives in an attempt to discover what was the state of American music at the beginning of the Twentieth Century do you fancy that he will take the trouble to exhume and dig into the ponderous scores of Henry Hadley, Arthur Foote, Ernest Schelling, George W. Chadwick, Horatio W. Parker, and the rest of the recognizedly "important" composers of the present day? Will he hesitate for ten minutes to peruse the scores of *Mona*, the *Four Seasons Symphony* or *The Pipe of Desire?* A plethora of books and articles on the subject will cause him to wonder why so much pother was made about Edward MacDowell, and he will even shake his head a trifle wearily over the saccharine delights of *The Rosary* and *Narcissus.* But if he is lucky enough to run across copies of *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee, Alexander's Ragtime Band*, or *Hello Frisco*, which are scarcely mentioned in the literature of our time, his face will light up and he will feel very much as Yvette Guilbert must have felt when she unearthed *Le*

Cycle du Vin, or *Le Lien Serré* or *C'est le Mai*, and he will attempt to find out, probably in vain (until he disinters a copy of this article in some public library) something about the composers, Lewis F. Muir, Irving Berlin, and Louis A. Hirsch, the true grandfathers of the Great American Composer of the year 2001.

There are difficulties in his way. Nothing disappears so soon from the face of the earth as a *very* popular song. The music shops sell hundreds of thousands of copies before the demand suddenly ceases. No more copies are ordered from the publishers, who themselves lose interest in songs which may be taking up space which should be allotted to newer tunes. As for the purchasers, on every moving day they consign their old popular songs to the dustheap. *After the Ball* makes way for *Two Little Girls in Blue* (or vice-versa; I really can not be expected to remember *that* far back!) Try to buy *After the Ball* now and see if you can. Advertise for a copy and see if you can get one. You will find it very difficult, I think, and yet it was only 1892, or 1893, when everybody was singing this melancholy tale of the misadventures of a little girl in a big city. No doubt at that period kind old ladies stopped on the streets to pat bleached blondes on

the cheeks, with the reflection, "She may be *somebody's* daughter."

Music of that variety will not be sought after by collectors and prized and sung again, except out of curiosity, or to "furnish innocent merriment." There will be those, no doubt, impelled to form a collection of the sentimentalities of the late Nineteenth Century, including therein the drawings of Howard Chandler Christy, which will be as rare as black hawthorne vases in 2000, and the novels of George Barr McCutcheon, a single copy of whose "Nedra" or "Graustark" may fetch the tidy sum of forty dollars in gold at some Twenty-first Century auction.

The sentimental song, however, has been largely obliterated in the output of the best new music of the Twentieth Century, into which a new quality has crept, a quality which may serve to keep it alive, just as the "coon songs" which preceded it in the Nineteenth Century have been kept alive. *Dixie* and such solemn tunes as were devised by Stephen C. Foster are not to be scoffed at. They are not scoffed at, as we very well know. They are sung and played like the folk-songs of other nations. They are known all over the world. They have found their way into serious compositions by celebrated composers. Even the cake-

walks of a later date, *The Georgia Campmeeting*, *Hello, Ma Baby*, and the works of Williams and Walker (curiously enough the best ragtime has not been written by negroes, although *Under the Bamboo Tree* and the extraordinary *At the Ball* are the work of black men) have their value, but ragtime, as it exists to-day, had not been invented in the Eighteen Nineties. The apotheosis of syncopation had not begun. Not that syncopation is new in music. Nearly the whole of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* is based on it. Schumann scarcely wrote two consecutive bars which are not syncopated. But ragtime syncopation is different. Louis Hirsch once pointed out to me what he considered its distinctive feature. "The melody and harmony are syncopated separately," was his explanation and it will have to suffice, in spite of the fact that the same thing is true of the prelude to *Parsifal*, in which the conductor is forced to beat 6–4 time with one hand and 4–4 with the other, and of Spanish dances, in which singer, guitarist, public, and dancer vie with one another to produce a complexity of rhythm. There is abundance of syncopation and the most esoteric rhythmic intricacy in Igor Strawinsky's ballet, *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, but ragtime is not the word to describe that vivid score, nor is

it likely that any one can find much resemblance between *Everybody's Doing It* or *Ragging the Scale* and the jota or the prelude to *Parsifal.*

There is a theory that the test of good music is whether you tire of it or not. If I were to be allowed to apply this test I would say frankly that *Die Walküre* and Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* are not good music. In a brilliant essay Louis Sherwin explodes verbal torpedoes about this point, warning his readers not to forget that if they heard the music of the "classic" composers exploited by every street organ and cabaret pianist it would soon become as intolerable as *Pretty Baby* has become during the summer just past. Probably a great many people are tired of hearing *Die Wacht am Rhein,* but that does not prove that it is not a good tune.

The works of our best composers have been highly appreciated. Strawinsky collects examples of them with assiduity and intends to use them in some of his forthcoming works just as he has used French and Russian popular songs in *The Firebird* and *Petrouchka.* Popular songs, indeed, form as good a basis for the serious composer to work upon as the folk-song. This is a remark I have been intending to make for some time and I want to emphasize it. Take, for ex-

ample, the songs in the répertoire of Yvette Guilbert; some are folk-songs and some are not. I defy any one outside of Julien Tiersot, Professor Jean Beck, H. E. Krehbiel, and one or two others, to tell you which is which, and they can tell you because they *know* all the available collections of French folk-songs. Therefore, when they hear Mme. Guilbert sing a melody that is strange to them they take it for granted that it must have had a composer. A folk-song, according to the authorities, is a song which has no composer; it just grows. Some one sings it one day in the fields, some one else adds to it, and finally there it is before your ears, a song known all over the country-side, but no one knows who started it rolling. *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* is such a folk-song; it is an extremely good example and it has been quoted with effect in Dvorak's symphony, *From the New World. Funiculi' Funicula'* is *not* a folk-song. It is a popular Neapolitan song (most popular Neapolitan songs, like *O Sole Mio, Santa Lucia,* and *Maria Mari,* are not folk-songs) written by Denza, a well-known composer, to celebrate the funicular railway in Naples. Nevertheless, no less a personage than Richard Strauss quoted it bodily in his symphonic fantasia, *Aus Italien,* although to be sure, he laboured under the

impression at the time that it was a folk-song. Similarly an American tune, *It Looks to me Like a Big Night To-night* found its way into *Elektra*. This may have been unconscious assimilation on the part of Strauss; at any rate it is interesting to note how a vulgar air was transformed into the beautiful theme — one of the most expressive in this music drama — of the Children of Agamemnon. When Paul Dukas's lyric drama, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, the critical writers, almost to a man, referred to the song of the wives, which floats out of the cellar of the castle when Ariane opens the door in the first act, as a Brittany folk-song. So it may very well be; I believe that Dukas has said that it was. However, I am informed on good authority that he composed it himself! It has a folk-song air, to be sure, and it is interesting to catch its resemblance to the *Berceuse* of the Princess of the Sea in Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *Sadko* and to the old Spanish tune, known to us as *Flee as a Bird*, which Eugene Walter has used with such theatrical effect in his play, *The Assassin*. *La Jambe de Bois*, utilized by Strawinsky in the first scene of *Petrouchka*, might be a folk-song but it is not. It is a French popular song. "When Elgar used a genuine Welsh folk-

song in his *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* a well-known London critic, a prominent member of the Folk-Song Society, declared it to be a poor imitation of the folk-style," writes Ernest Newman. "When the legend got about that a certain melody in *In the South* was an Italian folk-song, the same critic recognized the genuine folk-quality in it, and it was distinctly unfortunate for him that the melody happened to be Elgar's own invention from first to last."

Thus it happens that while many composers, even such celebrated men (in their day) as Raff, Rubinstein, Gade, and Mendelssohn, fall rapidly into oblivion, the composer of a *good* popular song is assured of immortality as such things go. His name may be forgotten but his song will be sung down through the century as often perhaps as any folk-song, probably a good deal oftener. Take *The Old Folks at Home*, for example, or *Dixie*, or *My Old Kentucky Home*, or *Old Black Joe*, and you will find that more people know them and sing them and love them to-day, nearly three-quarters of a century after they were composed, than know or sing or love *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, or *Nobody Knows de Trouble I've Seen.*

It is my theory that the American composers of to-day (I am still speaking of Irving Berlin,

Louis Hirsch, Lewis F. Muir, and others of their kind) have brought a new quality into music, a spirit to be found in the best folk-dances of Spain, in gypsy, Hungarian, and Russian popular music, and a form entirely new. They have been working for a livelihood, to be sure, but in that respect they have only followed the precedent established by Offenbach, Richard Strauss, and Puccini.

Bernard Shaw has probably made a great deal more money than Henry Arthur Jones, but no-one thinks of calling him less of an artist than Mr. Jones for that reason. Zuloaga sells his pictures and Rodin his sculptures at very high rates. There seems to be, indeed, no particular reason why an artist should not be permitted to make money if he is able to do so. It is the nature of some artists to shy at the annoyances and complications of business. The work of others, Stéphane Mallarmé, Monticelli, is antipathetic to the crowd and always will be. Many of the greatest artists, however, have made the widest appeal (I might mention Beethoven, Michael Angelo, and Tolstoi) and some few men of this stamp have been able to transform their inspirations into worldly goods. In the circumstances one can scarcely blame Avery Hopwood and Irving Berlin for making money.

The most obvious point of superiority of our ragtime composers (overlooking the fact that their music is pleasanter to listen to) over Messrs. Parker, Chadwick, and Hadley, is that they are expressing the very soul of the epoch while their more serious confrères are struggling to pour into the forms of the past, the thoughts of the past, re-arranged, to be sure, but without notable expression of inspiration. They have nothing new to say and no particular reason for saying it. Louis Hirsch told me of a scene he once witnessed at Joseffy's: A new pupil entered and proceeded to play for the master. Joseffy interrupted her. "You are not playing the right notes," he said. "I'm sure that I am," she replied. "Begin again." She did so. "That's wrong," he interrupted again. "It's not written like that." "But it is. Won't you look at it, please?" He examined the score and apologized, "Oh, it's something of MacDowell's. I see you were right. I thought you were playing a transcription of the *Tristan* prelude." "I have remarked," writes Turgeniev in one of his letters to Mme. Viardot, "that in imitative work the most *spirituelles* are precisely the most detestable, when they take themselves seriously. A sot copies servilely; a man of spirit without talent imitates pretentiously and

with an effort, with the worst of all efforts, with that of wishing to be original."

Regard the form of *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee.* A writer in the "London Times" calls attention to the fact that, although for convenience it is written out in a rhythm of 8, it is really a rhythm of 3 followed by a rhythm of 5, proceeding without warning occasionally into the normal rhythm of 8. It is impossible for many trained singers to read ragtime at all. They can decipher the notes but they do not understand the conventions observed by the composers in setting these notes on paper, conventions which are A B Cs to every cabaret performer.

The complicated vigour of American life has expressed itself through the trenchant pens of these new musicians. It is the only music produced in America to-day which is worth the paper it is written on. It is the only American music which is enjoyed by the nation (lovers of Mozart and Debussy prefer ragtime to the inert and saponaceous classicism of our more serious-minded composers); it is the only American music which is heard abroad (and it is heard everywhere, in the trenches by way of the victrola, in the Café de Paris at Monte Carlo, in Cairo, in India, and in Australia), and it is the only music on which the

musicians of our land can build on in the future. If it can be urged against it that it is a hybrid product, depending upon negro and Spanish rhythms, at least the same objection can be urged against Spanish music itself, which has emerged from the music of the Moors and the Arabs. Havelock Ellis even finds Greek and Egyptian influences.

If the American composers with (what they consider) more serious aims, instead of writing symphonies or other worn-out and exhausted forms which belong to another age of composition, would strive to put into their music the rhythms and tunes that dominate the hearts of the people a new form would evolve which might prove to be the child of the Great American Composer we have all been waiting for so long and so anxiously. I do not mean to suggest that Edgar Stillman Kelley should write variations on the theme of *Oh You Beautiful Doll!* or that Arthur Farwell should compose a symphony utilizing *The Gaby Glide* for the first subject of the *allegro* and *Everybody's Doing It* for the second, with the *adagio* movement based on *Pretty Baby* in the minor key. It is not my intention to start some one writing a tone-poem called *New York*, in which all these songs and ten or fifteen more should be themati-

cally bundled together and finally wrapped in the profundities of a fugue. But if any composer, bearing these tendencies in mind, will allow his inspiration to run riot, it will not be necessary for him to quote or to pour his thought into the mould of the symphony, the string quartet, or any other defunct form, to stir a modern audience. The idea, manifestly based though it may be on the work of Irving Berlin and Louis Hirsch, will express itself in some new way. Percy Aldridge Grainger, Igor Strawinsky, Erik Satie, are all working along these lines, to express modernity in tone, allowing the forms to create themselves, but alas, none of these men is an American!

Americans are inclined to look everywhere but under their noses for art. It never occurs to them that any object which has any relation to their everyday life has anything to do with beauty. Probably the Athenians were much the same. When some stranger admired the classic pile on the Acropolis the Athenians in all probability turned up their noses with the scornful remark, "That! Oh, that's the Parthenon; it's been here for ages!" It will be remembered that Mytyl and Tyltyl in *The Bluebird* spent considerable time and covered a good deal of ground in their search for that rare ornithological symbol, only to discover

that it existed all the time at home, the last place in the world where they thought of looking for it. Our Woolworth and Flatiron Buildings we are likely to ignore while we bow the knee before the Château District of Fifth Avenue and our ridiculous Public Library. Châteaux are all very well on the Loire but imitations of them have no place in New York. As for that absurd Roman Library! Imagine what might have been done with a sky scraper. The present building, years in course of erection, has already practically outgrown its usefulness, and it has not been open to the public for a decade. It is already too small and when one observes the acres of space wasted in corridors one groans. Of course a library in New York should shoot straight up into space, at least forty stories high. Speeding elevators should hoist the student in a jiffy to whatever mental stimulation he required! R. J. Coady in a very amusing magazine called "The Soil" has sung the praises of American machinery, and his illustrations indeed show us magnificent works of art, of the best kind since they are also utilitarian. One day Mina Loy picked up one of those pasteboard folders to which matches are attached, which are given away at all cigar counters for the use of patrons. "Some day these will be very

rare and then they will be considered beautiful," she said, and it is true. A few years after we discover how to light our cigarettes with our personal magnetism, or perhaps stop smoking altogether, such a contrivance will naturally assume an interest for curious collectors, and become as diverting an object for a cabinet as a Japanese scent bottle or Capo di Monte porcelain. The Baron de Meyer has found it amusing to decorate rooms with early Victorian atrocities such as baskets of shells and antimacassars, the sort of thing that went with black walnut commodes, knitted firescreens, whatnots, and Rogers' groups in the days, not so very long ago, when "Godey's Lady's Book" reposed on the centre table near the Family Bible. But now they are rare, and therefore curious; they even assume a certain beauty in our eyes.

In his essay on "The Poet" Ralph Waldo Emerson found occasion to remark: "We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer; then in the Middle Age; then in Calvinism. Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism

and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphi, and are as swiftly passing away." It is impossible to appreciate what is constantly before our eyes, that which is buzzing in our ears. We are so accustomed to ragtime that we scarcely know that it exists. It would be absurd, you think, to consider it as art, because it is so commonplace. One might as easily consider the Woolworth Building or the Manhattan Bridge works of art and how could any one possibly do that? Just the same I am inclined to believe that the Woolworth Building, the Manhattan Bridge, and that "roaring, epic rag-time tune," *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee* are among the first twenty-four beautiful things produced in America. It is no more use to imitate French or German music than it is to imitate French or German architecture. The sooner we realize this the better for all of us.

January 23, 1917.

The Importance of Electrical Picture Concerts

The Importance of Electrical Picture Concerts

IN an article called "Music for Museums" I once complained of the unvaried fare offered to us by the programme makers of the symphony concerts, a monotonous round of the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms, the overtures of Weber, and excerpts from Wagner's music dramas. There should be laws restricting orchestral organizations to one Beethoven symphony a season, I asserted, and I berated orchestral conductors for their tendency to give the old masters places that should be reserved, at least on occasion, for the younger generation. My remarks seem to have been read and taken seriously unless it can be supposed that the conductors themselves have seen the error of their ways, for during the current season (1916–17) we have found Mr. Damrosch and even Mr. Stransky (insofar as he has been able so to do without cracking the conditions of the famous Pulitzer will, which stipulated that the music of Beethoven, Liszt, and Wagner should be frequently performed at the concerts of the Philharmonic Society) vying with each other

in an effort to discover unperformed works in dusty attics or on the shelves of the music shops and libraries, and to give early hearings to new music by modern composers. Up to date, to be sure, they have ignored a good deal that we might conceivably listen to with pleasure, but they have provided us with specimens previously unheard, at least in these benighted parts, of the art of Haydn and Mozart; Richard Strauss's *Macbeth*, long buried has been dug up, and the new *Alpine Symphony*, still-born, has been played; a suite from Strawinsky's earliest ballet, *The Firebird*, and several movements of a symphony by Zandonai have been added to the répertoire of the concert room; and d'Indy's *Istar*, which we have long prayed for, has been revived, together with a more ancient treasure, Raff's *Lenore Symphony*, once as popular as Tschaikowsky's *Sixth Symphony*. Now these are steps, tentative to be sure, in the right direction, and although a good deal of this music, some of us, at the cost of burning in hell, would refuse to hear twice, it is certainly pleasanter to hear it once than to listen to the standbys and battle horses of the ordinary concert season, year after year, a procedure which always makes me cry out with Shakespeare's duke, "Enough; no more, 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before."

Dr. Muck in Boston does not agree with me. He even brings his men to New York to play Schumann's *Rhenish Symphony* and Rimsky-Korsakow's *Scheherazade* and calls the result a programme! This strikes me as insolence; but it is the efficient kind of insolence, like the rape of Belgium, which there is no gainsaying. The concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall are always sold out and Dr. Muck could, if he so desired (and I am expecting something of the sort), make up a programme consisting of the *Beautiful Blue Danube* waltz and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* without any appreciable effect on the box office.

There is, of course, the necessity (so it is regarded) of educating the children. They must, according to the accepted theory of education, hear what has been done before they hear what will be done, but it does not seem necessary to turn the best orchestra in this country (one of the best anywhere) into an educational institution. It is too disheartening to realize, as some of us must, that the orchestra of orchestras, which one might hope to find exploiting new tonal combinations for our delectation, is becoming a museum where rare old bits of tune may be inspected and reheard.

Hope has appeared, however, in an unlooked for

quarter. The extreme popularity of the cinema theatres was not to be guessed at a few seasons ago, nor could any of us have foretold that symphony orchestras of a size and quality which compare more than favourably with some of our established organizations would play sweet music in these temples of amusement from late morning till midnight. No, this was not to be foreseen or foreheard. The accompaniment to the pictures is scarcely a matter for congratulation, as yet (as I have indicated elsewhere at some length), but the accompaniment to the pictures is only a small part of the duty of an orchestra in a theatre devoted to electrical dramas. Now a concert at a moving picture show is often a much more serious matter than an old Theodore Thomas popular programme. Symphonies, concertos, rhapsodies, arias, overtures (from those of *Dichter und Bauer* and *Guillaume Tell* to those of *Lohengrin* and Tschaikowsky's *1812*) all figure in the scheme. At one of these theatres more music is performed in one day than an assiduous concert-goer could hope to hear in three in the concert halls. The duration of a symphony concert is about two hours with a short intermission, that of a song recital about an hour and a half, but an orchestra, or an organ, or a piano, furnishes a pretty continuous

flow of melody in a moving picture theatre from 11 A. M. to 11 P. M. In the large houses soloists are sandwiched in between pictures; and sometimes these soloists are better performers than those one hears under more holy auspices — frequently they are the same. The violinists play Kreisler . . . and the Beethoven *Romances*, and pieces by Drdla and Vieuxtemps and de Beriot and Paganini and Mendelssohn. . . . Yes, the first movement of the E minor concerto sometimes figures in moving picture theatre concert programmes where, at the present day, I am inclined to believe it belongs.

This might be regarded as poetic justice. It is true, however, and a fact that cannot be ignored. It strikes me that from this time on we should hear precious little about "concerts for young people," "educational concerts," "popular concerts," and the like. In the circumstances the directors of our best orchestras can find no flimsy excuse for playing too much Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, or Wagner, or any of the works of Greig, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Tschaikowsky. Brahms, by the peculiar veils of his art, is protected for the moment from the moving picture theatre (Bruckner seems to be protected from any theatre at all), although the violinists occasionally perform his

gypsy dances, and almost any day I expect to hear between Douglas Fairbanks and Charley Chaplin some deep-voiced contralto sing the *Sapphische Ode* or the *Vergebliches Ständchen*. . . . The importance of the musical accompaniment to the film and of the intermediate concert numbers is obviously recognized by the managers of such theatres as the Strand and the Rialto and the electric picture theatres on Second Avenue. The close attention with which the music is followed and the very violent applause which congratulates each performer, often exacting recall numbers, are ready proofs of the pleasure it gives. What is known as "cheap" music is seldom played. In fact, there is so much of an air of the concert room about these performances that I am afraid they would bore me even if the music were less familiar to my ears. I should prefer, on these occasions, more informality, more excursions into the rhythmic realms conjured up for us by Louis Hirsch and Irving Berlin. Nothing of the sort need be hoped for. The music performed is what is known to the less tone-educated multitudes as "classic."

Any intelligent child, with a little direction from a musical elder, can pick up the routine of the concert and opera world in a ten weeks' course at the Rialto or the Strand. Such unavoidable songs

as the prologue to *Pagliacci* and the subsequent tenor air from the same opera, all three of Dalila's airs, the waltz from *La Boheme*, the prayer from *Tosca*, *Celeste Aida*, *Cielo e Mar*, *O Paradiso*, *Danny Deever*, *Les Filles de Cadiz*, the habanera from *Carmen*, *Dich Theure Halle*, *The Two Grenadiers*, *Dost Thou Know That Fair Land?* from *Mignon*, the jewel waltz from *Faust*, the page's song from *Les Huguenots*, the *Miserere*, the prayer from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*, *Depuis le Jour* from *Louise*, the gavotte from *Manon*, *Pleurez mes Yeux* from *Le Cid*, the drinking song from *La Traviata*, the *Ava Maria* from *Otello*, *Plus Grand dans son Obscurité* from Gounod's *La Reine de Saba*, and *Che Faro Senza Euridice?* will be as familiar to his little ears as *Dixey* or the stolen strains of *America*.

In like manner he will accustom himself to the delights of Kreisler's *Caprice Viennois* and *Tambourin Chinois*, Beethoven's two violin *Romances*, the Bach air arranged for the G string, the *Preislied* from *Die Meistersinger*, arranged by Wilhelmj, Pierné's *Sérénade*, Dvorak's *Humoresque*. . . . . As for the concert répertoire he will hear the overtures to *Euryanthe* and *Oberon*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Tannhäuser*, *Sakuntala*,

Semiramide and such concert pieces and tone-poems as the *Danse Macabre, Phaëton, Mephisto Waltz, Les Préludes,* some of the orchestrated rhapsodies of Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakow's *Spanish Caprice,* the *Arlésienne* suite, the *Peer Gynt* suite, a number of Strauss waltzes, Massenet's *Elégie,* the entr'actes from *The Jewels of the Madonna,* certain ballet airs of Gluck, etc.

He will not be cognizant of the fact that he is getting what is known as a "musical education" (the knowledge of and the ability to hum tunes from seven-eighths of the aforementioned pieces would generally be considered as a musical education). Heaven forefend that such an idea be put into his head! The moving picture concerts, like the pictures themselves should be classified as amusements. . . . Only having gone thus far, why not go a little farther? If one must become acquainted with Wagner in the concert hall at all, why not in the electric picture theatre? There are no excerpts in the present concert répertoire that could not as well be played there; the *Funeral March* from *Götterdämmerung,* the *Lohengrin* prelude, the *Good Friday Spell* from *Parsifal,* the *Ride of the Valkyries,* and all the rest of them should be doled out to the youngsters seeking tone-knowledge and to those oldsters who insist upon

hearing them divorced from the text and the stage action, between the actualities and the feature film. And while you can scarcely ask Dr. Muck or Mr. Damrosch to pay Beethoven the compliment of giving him up altogether for the time being, his music might be played less by the organized orchestras in view of the hearings it would receive at the hands of the moving picture societies. The first two symphonies, at any rate, could be left to their mercies. Mendelssohn, as a symphonist, might also be tendered to their keeping. . . . Grieg and Liszt, for the most part . . . Rubinstein, Tschaikowsky, and Massenet, a good deal of Saint-Saëns . . . Glazunow and Elgar, certainly Elgar (if the moving picture audiences would permit it). There is another field for the Strand Philharmonic Society, for the band of the Academy of Music: the exploitation of the American composer who, one complains, never gets his chance at a hearing. The conductors of these concerts might introduce new music by George W. Chadwick, Henry Hadley, Arthur Farwell, Edgar Stillman Kelley, and Ernest Schelling.

If anything so nearly pleasant as this happens in the musical world (and there are, as I stated in the beginning, indications that it is happening), think of the space there would be on the pro-

grammes of our august societies for the new music our curious ears are aching to hear! Think of the resurrections of works by Mozart, Haydn, César Franck, that one never does hear. Perhaps Debussy's *La Mer*, *Nocturnes*, and *Images* (*Iberia*, *Gigue*, and *Rondes de Printemps*), all too infrequently played, would become more familiar. I should like to listen at least once to Albeniz's *Catalonia* and Turina's *La Procession du Rocio*, which Debussy has compared to a luminous fresco. . . . Spanish music altogether is unknown in our concert halls. . . . We could hear more Sibelius and Moussorgsky . . . a little Borodine . . . John Carpenter . . . Schoenberg's *Five Pieces* . . . Strawinsky's *Scherzo Fantastique* and the *Sacrifice to the Spring*. Why not even *Petrouchka?* Ornstein's *The Fog*, Ravel, Dukas (has *La Péri* been played here?), d'Indy, Chabrier, Korngold, Reger, Loeffler. . . .

December 7, 1916.

Modern Musical Fiction

"We must beware of checking the fancy of the novelist by pedantic restrictions —"

Andrew Lang.

Modern Musical Fiction

I

IT has been the fashion for musicians to sneer at the attempts of literary men and women to celebrate their fellow-craftsmen. Novels which float in a tonal atmosphere frequently do contain a large percentage of errors, but is this not as true of novels which deal with electrical engineers, book-binders, painters, politicians, or clowns of the circus? Perhaps not quite. To learn the technical phraseology, the bibliography, the iconography, the history, the chronology of music, a man must devote a lifetime to its study. Happy the musical pedant who does not make blunders now and again. They cannot be avoided. Even our accredited music critics, be they ever so wary, occasionally fall into traps. In the circumstances we should smile leniently on the minor and major mistakes of our minor and major novelists. To a musician, to be sure, these are frequently ludicrous. One of Ouida's characters has the habit of playing organ selections from the masses of Mendelssohn, and the tenor in "Moths" goes about singing melodies from Palestrina! In

"Les Miserables" Victor Hugo allots one of Hadyn's quartets to three violins and a flute. In "Peg Woffington" Charles Reade describes the actress as whistling a quick movement and then tells how Mr. Cibber was confounded by "this sparkling *adagio*," and the following passage from Marie Corelli's "The Sorrows of Satan" deserves what notoriety this page can afford it: "An amiable nightingale showed him (Prince Rimanez) the most elaborate methods of applying rhythmed tune to the upward and downward rush of the wind, thus teaching him perfect counterpoint, while chords he learnt from Neptune." Even George Moore, whose "Evelyn Innes" is generally regarded as one of the most successful attempts of a novelist to describe musicians and music, in "Ave" speaks of Anton Seidl as a broken old man who looked back upon his life as a failure. However, it is easy to paraphrase a happy remark made by Andrew Lang in his preface to "A Tale of Two Cities": "The historical novelist is not the historian." So we may say that the musical novelist is not the musician.

In Europe writers of fiction have frequently chosen musical subjects. Balzac's "Gambara" and "Massimilla Doni," the tale of a musical de-

generate whose chief pleasure it is to hear two tones in perfect accord, come to mind. Other more or less familiar French examples are Camille Selden's "Daniel Vlady" (1862), Guillaume Edouard Désiré Monnaie's "Les Sept Notes de la Gamme" (1848), George Sand's "Consuelo," and Romain Rolland's "Jean-Christophe." Nor should one forget Saint-Landri, composer and conductor, who figures prominently in Guy de Maupassant's "Mont Oriol." Listen to him: "Yes, my dear friend, it is finished, finished, the hackneyed style of the old school. The melodists have had their day. This is what people cannot understand, music is a new art, melody in its first lisping. The ignorant ear loves the burden of a song. It takes a child's pleasure, a savage's pleasure in it. I may add that the ears of the people or of the ingenuous public, the simple ears, will always love little songs, airs, in a word. It is an amusement similar to that in which the frequenters of café-concerts indulge. I am going to make use of a comparison in order to make myself understood. The eye of the rustic loves crude colours and glaring pictures; the eye of the intelligent representative of the middle class who is not artistic loves shades benevolently pretentious and affecting subjects; but the artistic eye, the refined

eye, loves, understands, and distinguishes the imperceptible modulations of a single tone, the mysterious harmonies of light touches invisible to most people. . . . Ah! my friends, certain chords madden me, cause a flood of inexpressible happiness to penetrate all my flesh. I have to-day an ear so well exercised, so finished, so matured, that I end by liking even certain false chords, just like a virtuoso whose fully developed taste amounts to a form of depravity. I am beginning to be a vitiated person who seeks for extreme sensations of hearing. Yes, my friends, certain false notes. What delights! How this moves, how this shakes the nerves! how it scratches the ear — how it scratches! how it scratches!"

Hans Andersen has written at least two musical tales, "The Improvisatore" and "Only a Fiddler." Another Norse story is Kristofer Janson's "The Spell-bound Fiddler." In D'Annunzio's "Il Fuoco" there are long passages devoted to a discussion of music; Richard Wagner is a figure in this novel and there is an account of his death in Venice. There should be mention of Henryk Sienkiewicz's "Yanks the Musician and Other Tales." Tolstoi made music rather than a musician the hero of "The Kreutzer Sonata." It is the first and last time that this celebrated sonata for violin

and piano has performed the offices of an aphrodisiac.

German literature is full of examples: Gustav Nicolai's "Arabesken" (1835) "Die Geweihten" (1836), and "Die Musikfeind," G. Blaul's "Das Musikfest" (1836), August Kahlert's "Tonleben" (1838), G. A. Keferstein's "König Mys von Fidibus" (1838), Julius Becker's "Der Neuromantiker" (1840), Ludwig Bechstein's "Clarinette" (1840), Wilhelm Bachmann's "Catinka Antalani" (1845), Karl Goldmick's "Der Unsterbliche" (1848), Edward Maria Oettinger's "Rossini" (1851), Daniel Elster's "Des Nachtwächters Tochter" (1853), Eduard Mörike's "Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag" (1856), A. E. Brachvogel's "Friedemann Bach" (1859), and H. Rau's "Beethoven," "Mozart," and "Weber" are a few. Elise Polko's "Musical Tales" have been translated into English. One of the best of the German musical novels is comparatively recent, Ernst von Wolzogen's "Der Kraft-Mayr," translated by Edward Breck and Charles Harvey Genung as "Florian Mayr." The book gives an excellent picture of the Liszt circle at Weimar; the composer is one of the leading figures of the story and James Huneker asserts that it is the best existing portrait of Liszt.

Of course he is only presented as a teacher in his old age. Von Wolzogen, it will be remembered, supplied Richard Strauss with the book for his music drama, *Feuersnot*, yet to be given in America.

Elizabeth Sara Sheppard's "Charles Auchester," with which both the names of Mendelssohn and Sterndale Bennett are connected, is generally spoken of as the first musical novel in English. This is not strictly true. There were earlier attempts. The fourth edition of "Musical Travels Through England"— by the late Joel Collier (George Veal) was issued in 1776 and "The Musical Tour of Dr. Minim, A. B. C. and D. E. F. G. with a description of a new invented instrument, a new mode of teaching music by machinery, and an account of the Gullabaic system in general" appeared in London in 1818. There is further "Major Piper; or the adventures of a Musical Drone" in five volumes by the Reverend J. Thompson, the second edition of which appeared in 1803, but there is less about music in this novel than the title would imply. Since "Charles Auchester" there has been indeed a brood of musical novels. "Alcestis," dealing with musical life in Dresden in the time of Hasse, appeared in 1875. Jessie Fothergill's sentimental

story, "The First Violin" was published in 1878. Sometime later it was made into a play for Richard Mansfield. There are many others: George Meredith's "Sandra Belloni" and "Vittoria," Kate Clark's "The Dominant Seventh," J. Mitchell Chapple's "The Minor Chord," Edna Lyall's "Doreen," Rita's "Countess Daphne," Marion Crawford's "A Roman Singer," Edward L. Stevenson's "A Matter of Temperament," George Augustus Sala's "The Two Prima Donnas," J. H. Shorthouse's "A Teacher of the Violin," A. M. Bagby's "Miss Träumerei," Jane Kingsford's "The Soprano," Henry Harland's "As It Was Written," Henry Fothergill Chorley's "A Prodigy" (in three volumes, dedicated to Charles Dickens), William Kennedy's "The Prima Donna," Mrs. S. Samuel's "Cherry the Singer," Hall Caine's "The Prodigal Son," Allen Raine's "A Welsh Singer," Lucas Cleeve's "From Crown to Cross," E. F. Benson's "Sheaves," George du Maurier's "Trilby," Anne Douglas Sedgwick's (Mrs. Basil de Sélincourt) "Tante," made into a play for Ethel Barrymore, Arnold Bennett's "The Glimpse," John Philip Sousa's "The Fifth String," Gustave Kobbe's "All-of-a-Sudden Carmen," Della Pratt Grant's "Travelli, The Sorceress of Music," J. Meade Falkner's

"The Lost Stradivarius," Myrtle Reed's "The Master's Violin," and H. A. Vachell's "The Other Side." At least one of Walter Pater's tales, "Denys l'Auxerrois," is based on a musical theme, of a pagan boy who builds an organ, a pretty fable told with emotion and rhythm. Two of James Huneker's twelve volumes, "Melomaniacs" and "Visionaries," are devoted to short stories on musical subjects.

Robert Hichens has written one musical novel, "The Way of Ambition." The story is that of an English composer, Claude Heath, married to an ambitious young woman, Charmian, who determines to "make him." In this attempt she almost wrecks his career but after the complete failure of the opera she has urged him to write, he asserts himself and makes her see the folly of trying to direct the course of an artist. The beginning of the struggle is most amusingly depicted:

"On the morning after the house-warming, when a late breakfast was finished, but while they were still at the breakfast-table in the long and narrow dining-room, which looked out on the quiet square, Charmian said to her husband:

"'I've been speaking to the servants, Claude. I've told them about being very quiet to-day.'

"He pushed his tea-cup a little away from him.

"'Why?' he asked. 'I mean why specially to-day?'

"'Because of your composing. Alice is a good girl, but she is a little inclined to be noisy sometimes. I've spoken to her seriously about it.'

"Alice was the parlour-maid. Charmian would have preferred to have a man answer the door, but she had sacrificed to economy, or thought she had done so, by engaging a woman. As Claude said nothing, Charmian continued:

"'And another thing! I've told them all that you're never to be disturbed when you're in your own room, that they're never to come to you with notes, or the post, never to call you to the telephone. I want you to feel that once you are inside your own room you are absolutely safe, that it is sacred ground.'

"'Thank you, Charmian.'

"He pushed his cup farther away, with a movement that was rather brusque, and got up.

"'What about lunch to-day? Do you eat lunch when you are composing? Do you want something sent up to you?'

"'Well, I don't know. I don't think I shall want any lunch to-day. You see we've breakfasted late. Don't bother about me.'

"'It isn't a bother. You know that, Claudie.

But would you like a cup of coffee, tea, anything at one o'clock?'

"'Oh, I scarcely know. I'll ring if I do.'

"He made a movement. Charmian got up.

"'I do long to know what you are going to work on,' she said, in a changed, almost mysterious, voice, which was not consciously assumed.

. . . . . .

"Claude went up to the little room at the back of the house. At this moment he would gladly, thankfully, have gone anywhere else. But he felt he was expected to go there. Five women, his wife and the four maids, expected him to go there. So he went. He shut himself in, and remained there, caged."

We subsequently learn that he passed the time that day, and many thereafter reading Carlyle's "French Revolution." Now this is amusing.

Heath has a leaning towards Biblical subjects for his inspiration but Charmian urges him to write an opera; she succeeds, indeed, in making him do so and she also succeeds in disposing of it to Jacob Crayford, an American impresario who seems faintly modelled after Oscar Hammerstein. A good part of the book is taken up with descriptions of the writing of this opera (there is a striking passage descriptive of oriental music), its

rehearsals, its performance, and its failure. Robert Hichens knows music (he was at one time a music critic) and he knows the stage. These scenes are carefully done, but he asks the New York music critics to pass judgment on Heath's opera without having seen or heard the rehearsals. This is an inaccuracy. . . . One of the characters, a Frenchwoman, says, "English talent is not for opera. The Te Deum, the cathedral service, the oratorio form in one form or another, in fact the thing with a sacred basis, that is where the English strength lies." Mme. Sennier probably overlooked the fact that England's two greatest composers, Purcell and Sir Arthur Sullivan, did write operas and that most of the oratorios popular in England were written by Germans. Heath desires to write music for Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven" to the dismay of his wife who reads him other poetry in an attempt to set his muse on the right road. "She re-read Rossetti, Keats, Shelley, dipped into William Morris,— Wordsworth no — into Fiona Macleod, William Watson, John Davidson, Alfred Noyes." In the end, we are led to believe, Heath was well on the road towards becoming another Elgar.

W. J. Henderson's musical romance, "The Soul of a Tenor," is particularly wooden and lifeless.

The characters are but puppets at the behest of a not very skilful manipulator. The story concerns Leandro Baroni (originally Leander Barrett of Pittsburg), a tenor at the Metropolitan Opera House, who through a love affair with a gypsy soprano, Nagy Bosanska, finds "his soul," becomes a great Tristan, and returns to his puritanic and faithful American wife, from whom he had become estranged. There are glimpses of other singers, of rehearsals at the Metropolitan Opera House, of performances of *L'Africaine* and other operas. The author disclaims any intention of painting portraits of living models, with a brief exception in favour of magnificent Lilli Lehman rehearsing and singing *Don Giovanni* at Salzburg (Baroni is the Ottavio), but surely Mrs. Harley Manners, who attends morning musicales and rehearsals at the Opera, is an almost recognizable character. There are amusing pages; that in which the critics' views of Baroni are exposed is the most diverting: "It was universally conceded that he was in some ways the most gifted tenor since Jean de Reszke. The 'Boston Herald' declared that he was far greater because one night, when he had a cold, he sang out of tune, and this the Boston man declared showed that he was not a mere vocal machine. The 'Evening

Post' of New York fell at his feet because, when made up for Lohengrin, he was the image of Max Alvary. That he sang it like Campanini was not mentioned. The 'Tribune' published a deprecatory essay two columns long after he sang Don Ottavio in Mozart's inaccessible *Don Giovanni* and a sprightly weekly printed eight pictures of him and his shoes and stockings, with a Sunday page giving an intimate account of his manner of taking his morning bath and dressing for the day. The 'American' expressed regrets about him because, being an American, he did not advocate opera in English. The 'Sun' went into a profound analysis of his vocal method and his treatment of recitative in all schools of opera, showing thereby that he was a greater master of the lyric art than Farinelli or Garat, singers of whom the readers of the article had never heard, and about whom, therefore, they cared absolutely nothing. The 'Times' asserted that he had no method at all, and that this was what made him a truly great singer." Erudition steeps this pen, but why does Mr. Henderson, himself a music critic, and therefore not liable to error, spell Bruckner with an *umlaut?*

There are points of interest about Willa Sibert Cather's recent musical novel, "The Song of the

Lark," although I do not think the book as a whole can be considered successful. The Swedish-American singer who plods through its pages at the behest of the eyes of the reader was undoubtedly suggested by Olive Fremstad. The first hundred pages of the book are the best. Thea Kronborg growing up in Moonstone, Colorado, and her childhood friends are thoroughly delightful. The study years in Chicago and the love scenes in the home of the Cliff Dwellers are neither so interesting nor so true. Kronborg, the artist, does not seem to be realized by Miss Cather. The outlines of the completed figure are much more vague than those of the original rough sketch. Indeed as Thea grows older she seems to elude the author more and more. . . . Thea's artistic soul is born before Jules Breton's picture in the Chicago Art Institute; hence the title. . . . The fable is weak and the men who fill in the later pages are mere lay figures. There is a brief glimpse of Theodore Thomas and an arresting description of Pauline Viardot as Orphée. H. R. Haweis's "Musical Memories" play a part in Thea's early life. A Chicago soprano is drawn rather skilfully. . . . Thea at the Metropolitan Opera House sings Elsa, Sieglinde, Venus and Elizabeth, Leonora (in *Trovatore*), and Fricka

in *Das Rheingold.* Here is a passage which describes Olive Fremstad as well as it does Thea Kronborg: "It's the idea, the basic idea, pulsing behind every bar she sings. She simplifies a character down to the musical idea it's built on, and makes everything conform to that. The people who chatter about her being a great actress don't seem to get the notion of where *she* gets the notion. It all goes back to her original endowment, her tremendous musical talent. Instead of inventing a lot of business and expedients to suggest character, she knows the thing at the root, and lets the musical pattern take care of her. The score pours her into all those lovely postures, makes the light and shadow go over her face, lifts her and drops her. She lies on it, the way she used to lie on the Rhine music. Talk about rhythm!"

There are many plays on musical subjects: *The Broken Melody, La Tosca, The Greater Love, The Music Master, The Climax, The Tongues of Men,* Edward Knoblauch's *Paganini,* Hermann Bahr's *The Concert,* and René Fauchois's *Beethoven* are a few. Frank Wedekind has written two plays which may be included in the list: *Der Kammersänger,* presented as *The Tenor* by the Washington Square Players, and *Musik.*

II

Tower of Ivory

IT was to have been expected that Gertrude Atherton, who allows no ink to drop idly from her pen, would turn her attention to the American girl as opera singer; in a flamboyant and breathless romance, "Tower of Ivory," she has done so, on the whole creditably. There is considerable of reality about Margarete Styr, once Peggy Hill of New York. Mrs. Atherton has wisely set her history back in the last days of the mad Ludwig of Bavaria, for there might have been recognition scenes if she had made it contemporaneous. The author has admitted that Mottl-Fassbender was her model, but she has allowed her imagination full rein. Mottl-Fassbender is not an American, nor has she ever suggested a "tower of ivory"; however, she cannot be held responsible for Styr's early life. Mrs. Atherton's heroine was born in a mining camp, the daughter of a poor miner, and passes her childhood in dirty drudgery. Seduced by a drummer, she is taken to New York where she passes from one man to another until she falls into the hands of a millionaire who begins her musical education. By this time, however, she is so dis-

gusted with the male sex that she runs away presently to join a travelling theatrical troupe. In a short Pacific voyage, from one town to another, she suffers shipwreck and her life is saved by a boy who ties her to a floating mast, projecting above the angry waves, and who clings to it desperately himself as there is no more rope. After several hours she sees him drop below where he is washed away, the helpless prey of the sea. At this moment her soul is born, what Mrs. Atherton calls the "Soul of an Artist." Remembering her voice she goes to Europe. She begins to read. One of the few books mentioned is "A Rebours." These study years or months are elided. They are dangerous ground for a novelist. It will be remembered that George Moore neglected to furnish them in "Evelyn Innes." When we first meet the Styr, indeed, she has erased her past, has become the reigning Wagnerian singer in Munich, the favourite artist of Ludwig, and an ascetic. She lives alone and is rarely to be seen except on the stage. Shut up in her tower over the Isar her personal life becomes a mystery. Through this isolation a young Englishman, charmingly characterized, much better done on the whole than the Styr herself, breaks. As he enters her house Mrs. Atherton describes it to

us. It is a relief to discover that the Styr has as bad taste in house decoration as most singers. Have you ever been in a prima donna's apartment?

"She felt some vanity in displaying her salon to one she knew instinctively possessed a cultivated and exacting taste. It was a large room on the right of the entrance, with a row of alcoves on the garden side, each furnished to represent one of the purple flowers. The wood-work was ivory white; the silk panels of the same shade were painted with lilacs, pansies, asters, orchids, or lilies, as if reflecting the alcoves. There was but one picture, a full-length portrait of Styr as Brynhildr, by Lenbach. The spindle-legged furniture was covered with pale brocades and not aggressive of any period. It was distinctly a 'Styr Room,' as her admirers, who were admitted on the first Sunday of the month, had long since agreed, while sealing it with their approval."

Styr's répertoire includes the Brünnhildes, Isolde, Kundry, Elizabeth and Venus, Iphigenia, the Countess in *Figaro*, Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Leonora in *Fidelio*, Donna Anna, Aida, and Dido in *Les Troyens*. She is indeed the "*hochdramatisch*" of the Hoftheater in Munich. She gives command performances of

Parsifal, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Tristan* before Ludwig, always at midnight, the favourite hour of that remarkable monarch. On one occasion she smuggles her young Englishman in and he hears the king heave a deep sigh, presumably because after death he will have no further opportunities for enjoying the music of Wagner. . . . When we first meet the Styr she sings alone, by command, at Neuschwanstein, the country palace of Ludwig, at midnight and out of doors, on a bridge which crosses a mountain torrent. Her selections, chosen by the monarch, include Kundry's appearance to Klingsor, Act II, Scene I of *Parsifal*, part of the ensuing scene, the Cry of the Valkyries, and finally a group of songs. This reads very much like a description of Mme. Gadski appearing with the Philharmonic Society. The Styr, however, sings unaccompanied, without orchestra or piano!

There is a long account of her Isolde. We are told that by the expression of her eyes alone she can fix the mood of her audience. Her powers of suggestion are uncanny. On one occasion she shows the Englishman how she would play Mrs. Alving:

"'I won't permit you to question my right to be called an actress! You remember the scene in

Ghosts in which Mrs. Alving listens to Oswald's terrible revelation?'

"He nodded, holding his breath. She did not rise, nor repeat a word of the play, but he watched her skin turn grey, her muscles bag, the withering cracking soul stare through her eyes. Every part of her face expressed a separate horror, and he could have sworn that her hair turned white."

Mrs. Siddons, according to report, could move a roomful of people to tears merely by repeating the word, "Hippopotamus" with varying stress.

As Isolde the Styr gives another example of this power, "staring at the phials in the casket while the idea of death matured in her desperate brain,— death for herself as well as for the man that betrayed her,— raised her head slowly, her body to its full height. She looked the very genius of death, a malign fate awaiting its moment to settle upon the ripest fruits, the blithest hopes. A subtle gesture of her hand seemed to deprive it of its flesh, leave it a talon which held a scythe; by the same token one saw the skeleton under the blue robe; her mouth twisted into a grin, her eyes sank. It was all over in half a minute, it was but a fleeting suggestion, but it flashed out upon every sensitive soul present a picture of the charnel house, the worm, death

robbed of its poetry, stripped to the bones by the hot blasts from that caldron of hate."

We learn that "No other Isolde has ever been as great as Styr, for no other has been able to suggest this ferocious approach of a devastating force, this hurricane sweeping across the mind's invisible plain, tearing at the very foundations of life. And all this she expressed before singing a note, with her staring moving eyes, her eloquent body, still and concealed as it was, a gesture of the hand. . . . When she started up, crying out to the wind and waves to shatter the ship the passion in her voice hardly expressed the rage consuming her in plainer terms than that first long silent moment had done."

Brain, says Styr, all brain: "'You give no stage artist the credit of a brain, I suppose? Can you imagine a born actress — born, mind you — living her part, yet never quite shaking loose from that strong grip above? That is what is meant by "living a part." You abandon yourself deliberately — with the whole day's preparation — into that other personality, almost to a soul in possession, and are not your own self for one instant; although the purely mental part of that self never relaxes its vigilance over the usurper. It is a curious dual experience that

none but an artist can understand. Of course that perfect duality is only possible after years of study, work, practical experience, mastery of technique. . . . Most singers have no brain, no mental life; they must be taught their rôles like parrots, they put on a simulation of art with their costumes which deceives the great stupid public and touches no one. Mere emotionalism, animal robustness, they call temperament. I strengthened and developed my brain during those terrible years to such an extent that I now act out of it, think myself into every part, relying not at all upon the instructions of the uninspired, nor upon chance.' "

However, even brainy prima donnas with disgust for all men in their hearts are occasionally exposed to emotional storms, thinks Mrs. Atherton. The departure of Ordham for England and his subsequent marriage (there had never been talk of love or marriage between Ordham and Styr; their relationship up to this time had been idealistic) threw Styr into a frightful state. The bad news came to her on a *Tristan* night. She flung aside her carefully studied gestures, her prepared effects, and stormed through the music drama. Afterwards she felt that this performance had been so electrifying that any return to

her original conception of the rôle would be considered as an anti-climax. So she steadfastly refused to sing Isolde in Munich again. As a matter of fact this was probably the worst performance she had ever given.

There are descriptions of the singer as Brünnhilde: "In *Die Walküre* she made her alternately the jubilant sexless favourite of Wotan, shadowed subtly with her impending womanhood, and the goddess of aloof and immutable calm, Will personified, even when moved to pity. In *Götterdämmerung*, particularly of late, she had portrayed her as woman epitomized, arguing that all great women had the ichor of the goddess in their veins, and that primal woman was but the mother of sex modified (sometimes) but not remade. In the last act of *Siegfried* her voice was wholly dramatic and expressed her delight at coming into her woman's inheritance in ecstatic cries, almost shouts, which were never to be forgotten by any that heard them, and stirred the primal inheritance in the veriest butterfly of the court. In this beautiful love scene of *Götterdämmerung*, the last of the tetralogy, her voice was lyric, rich and round and full, as her voice must always be, but stripped of its darker quality, and while by no means angelic, a character with which she

could invest it when portraying the virgin Elizabeth, was as sweet and clear and triumphant as if bent upon giving the final expression to the first love of woman alloyed with knowledge." Somewhere else in the book there is another clue to her conception of the rôle of Brünnhilde: "Of late Styr had played the character consistently to the end as a woman. But to-night she appeared to defer once more to Wagner — possibly to the King — and to be about to symbolize the 'negation of the will to live,' the eternal sacrifice of woman, the immolation of self; although she had contended, and for that reason sang no more at Bayreuth, that such an interpretation was absurd as a finale for Brünnhilde, no matter what its beauty and truth in the abstract. The gods were doomed, her renouncement of life did not save them, and as for the sacrifice of woman to man, that she had accomplished twice over. Brünnhilde died as other women had died since, and doubtless before, in the hope of uniting with the spirit of her man, and because life was become abhorrent."

In the scene with Siegfried disguised as Gunther Styr made another of those physical transformations which so startled her audiences; at the close of the drama she mounted her horse and rode

straight into the flames. Mrs. Atherton says that only "Vogel" had done this before her. Probably she refers to Therese Vogl, a favourite Wagnerian singer in Munich in the Eighties and early Nineties. According to report Vogl (or was it Rosa Sucher?) did indeed mount the horse and charge into the wings, whereupon a dummy mounted on a *papier maché* horse was swung across the back of the stage into the flames. A substitution of this sort is in vogue in the Witch's ride in *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Metropolitan Opera House. There have been those who have danced the Dance of the Seven Veils in *Salome;* there have been tenors who have taken the terrific falls of Fra Diavolo or of Mâtha in *Salammbô,* but I have never heard of a Brünnhilde who has been brave enough to ride her Grane into the flames. Not trusting my own memory I asked Tom Bull, who has seen all the performances of the Wagner dramas at the Metropolitan since they were first produced there. He said that no soprano had ever attempted the feat at that house. "We've had but one Brünnhilde that would dare do it and that's Fremstad. She never did, however. No one ever did here. Why, we've had the same horse for years, a tame old creature, and even now he baulks on occasion." As luck

would have it that very day this nag gave the occupants of the stage some trouble!

There is an amusing scene depicting the effect of Wagner on the artistic temperament. Those of us who have been unfortunate enough to have visited singers in their dressing-rooms on such occasions will appreciate the following account:

"He (Ordham) had made his way across the back of the stage, passed opened doors of supers who were frankly disrobing, too hungry to observe the minor formalities, and was approaching the room of the prima donna, when its door was suddenly flung open, a little man was rushed out by the collar, twirled round, and hurled almost at his feet. The Styr, her hair down, her face livid, her eyes blazing shouted hoarsely at the object of her wrath, who took to his heels. The *intendant* rushed upon the scene. Styr screamed out that the minor official had dared come to her dressing-room with a criticism upon the set of her wig, and that if ever she were spoken to again at the close of a performance by any member of the staff, from the *intendant* down, she would leave Munich the same night. The great functionary fled, for she threatened to box his ears unless he took himself out of her sight, and the Styr, stormed up and down, beat the scenery

with her hands, stamped, hissed, her pallor deepening every second, until it was like white fire. Ordham half fascinated, half convulsed, at this glimpse of the artistic temperament in full blast, stared at her with his mouth open. She looked like some fury of the coal-pit, flying up from the sooty galleries on the wings of her voice. Her words had been delivered with a strange broad burring accent, which Ordham found more puzzling than her tantrum.

"Suddenly she caught sight of him. If possible her fury waxed.

"'You! You!' she screamed. 'Go! Get out of here! How dare you come near me? I hate you! I hate the whole world when I have finished an opera! They ought to give me somebody to kill! Go! I don't care whether you ever speak to me again or not —'"

Later she apologizes and explains: "'It is all over a few hours later, after I have taken a long walk in the Englischergarten, then eaten a prosaic supper of cold ham and fowl, eggs perchance, and salad! But for an hour after these triumphs I pay! I pay!'" Mrs. Atherton, perhaps, has idealized her heroine when she gives her better manners in private life: "'Tantrums do not hurt a prima donna; in fact they are of use

in inspiring the authorities with awe. But in private life — well, the price I sometimes had to pay was too high. I soon stopped throwing things about like a fishwife; and all the rest of it.' "

Evelyn Innes, it will be remembered, gave herself to Ulick Dean after a performance of *Tristan*. One of the characters of "The Way of Ambition" says: "The Empress Frederick told a friend of mine that no one who had not lived in Germany, and observed German life closely, could understand the evil spread through the country by Wagner's *Tristan*." "It is no wonder," says Mrs. Atherton, "the Germans keep on calling for more sensation, more thrill with an insatiety which will work the ruin of music and drama in their nation unless some genius totally different from Wagner rises and diverts them into safer channels. Beyond Wagner in his own domain there is nothing but sensationalism. Rather he took all the gold out of the mine he discovered and left but base alloy for the misguided disciples."

Margarete Styr was not engaged by Walter Damrosch to sing in New York although there seems to have been correspondence between them. But she did sing in London under Hans Richter and made a great success there. Her rôles seem

to have been the three Brünnhildes, Isolde, and Elizabeth. It was not felt that London was sophisticated enough to sit through her very voluptuous representation of Venus; so an older, fatter singer was put in the part and much of the scene was cut. Styr made her appearance as Elizabeth in the second act after the boxes were filled. Queen Victoria, having heard rumours of Peggy Hill's life in New York, refused to meet the Styr socially, did not entertain her at Buckingham or Windsor, but everybody else in London seems to have invited her.

III

Love Among the Artists

BERNARD SHAW wrote "Love Among the Artists" in 1881, but of all his published novels (the first of the five has never been printed) it was the last to reach the public; it was published serially in "Our Corner" in 1887–8. The author has never professed admiration for any of these early works. Dixon Scott calls Shaw the "son of Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*," and the Irishman concedes the truth of this description when he says "I was brought up in an atmosphere in which two of the main constituents were Italian opera and complete freedom of thought." He has written musical criticism and one complete book on music, "The Perfect Wagnerite"; all through his work run references to the tonal art, expertly expressed and adroitly placed. "Love Among the Artists" is far from being a completely satisfactory novel but on its musical side, at least, it is very diverting, and it is much more modern in its comments than most of the musical novels of a couple of decades later. In a preface the author explains his purpose, "I had a notion of illustrating the

difference between the enthusiasm for the fine arts which people gather from reading about them, and the genuine artistic faculty which cannot help creating, interpreting, or at least unaffectedly enjoying music and pictures." There are actresses and painters in the book but the most clearly outlined characters are musicians, an English composer (did such a good one ever exist?) and a Polish pianist. Both are delightfully limned and although it has been my misfortune up to date to meet softer-spirited and less noble-minded composers than Owen Jack who is done in the grand manner, modelled somewhat after Beethoven, at least the lady pianist is like the average interpretative instrumental artist.

We first meet Mme. Aurélie Szczympliça at the rehearsal of Jack's *Fantasia* by the Antient Orpheus Society. She has consented to introduce the new music to England; indeed so highly does she regard the composition, although she does not know the composer, that she has prevailed upon the directors of the Society to reverse their unfavourable decision in regard to its performance. Accompanied by her mother she comes in bundled in furs, and asks the conductor to rehearse the *Fantasia* first, although she avows her intention of remaining to hear the orchestra go

through with the rest of the programme. Jack is allowed to conduct his own work. The first section goes pretty well.

"But when a theme marked *andante cantabile,* which formed the middle section of the fantasia, was commenced by the pianist, Jack turned to her; said 'Quicker, quicker. *Plus vite';* and began to mark his beat by striking the desk. She looked at him anxiously; played a few bars in the time indicated by him; and then threw up her hands and stopped.

"'I cannot,' she exclaimed. 'I must play it more slowly or not at all.'

"'Certainly, it shall be slower if you desire it,' said the elder lady from the steps. Jack looked at her as he sometimes looked at Mrs. Simpson. 'Certainly it shall not be slower, if all the angels desired it,' he said, in well pronounced but barbarously ungrammatical French. 'Go on; and take the time from my beat.'

"The Polish lady shook her head; folded her hands in her lap; and looked patiently at the music before her. There was a moment of silence, during which Jack, thus mutely defied, glared at her with distorted features. Manlius rose irresolutely. Jack stepped down from the desk; handed him the stick; and said in a smoth-

ered voice, 'Be good enough to conduct this lady's portion of the fantasia. When *my* music recommences, I will return.'"

After the lady has had her way Jack is convinced that it is better than his!

She plays at the concert, appears in society, and immediately fascinates the stupidest young man in the book, Adrian Herbert, who breaks his engagement with an English lady to marry her. He paints very badly and his favourite composer is Mendelssohn. He sees nothing in Jack and his artist-wife acquires a great contempt for his opinions. They begin to quarrel soon after they are married; and each quarrel is usually followed by a passionate reunion. There is no question about her preferring her piano to her husband. Her mother is a mere automaton. Aurélie's world revolves around her ambition. Yet she is a lady. She would not promise to marry Adrian until he had secured his release from his engagement with the English girl; her manners in general are good. She is always, however, coldly self-sufficient. She does not speak English very fluently and like all artists she is susceptible to flattery, so that when an American utters some stupid commonplaces in the language she only half understands she gives him credit for possessing a

high degree of intelligence. A baby is born to this ill-assorted pair and this baby provides the occasion for one of the most deliciously humorous scenes in the book:

"Mary was in the act of handing the child carefully back to Madame Szczympliça, when Aurélie interposed swiftly; tossed it up to the ceiling; and caught it dexterously. Adrian stepped forward in alarm; Madame uttered a Polish exclamation; and the baby itself growled angrily. Being sent aloft a second time, it howled with all its might.

"'Now you shall see,' said Aurélie, suddenly placing it, supine, kicking and screaming, on the pianoforte. She then began to play the Skaters' Quadrille from Meyerbeer's opera of *The Prophet*. The baby immediately ceased to kick; became silent; and lay still with the bland expression of a dog being scratched, or a lady having her hair combed.

"'It has a vile taste in music,' she said, when the performance was over. 'It is old fashioned in everything. Ah yes. Monsieur Sutherland: would you kindly pass the little one to my mother.'"

Owen Jack is the type of high-tempered, ridiculously natural (without a trace of self-consciousness) composer, with, it must be added, a strong

strain of romanticism in his blood. He does not resemble Percy Grainger, Cyril Scott, Claude Debussy, Giacomo Puccini, or Engelbert Humperdinck. He is discovered on a park bench in the first chapter of the book, where, overhearing an old gentleman bemoaning his inability to find a tutor for his son; he applies for the position. Thus the author describes his first appearance: "He was a short, thick-chested young man, in an old creased frock coat, with a worn-out hat and no linen visible. His skin, pitted by smallpox, seemed grained with black, as though he had been lately in a coal-mine, and had not yet succeeded in towelling the coal-dust from his pores. He sat with his arms folded, staring at the ground before him. One hand was concealed under his arm: the other displayed itself, thick in the palm, with short fingers, and nails bitten to the quick. He was clean shaven, and had a rugged, resolute mouth, a short nose, marked nostrils, dark eyes, and black hair, which curled over his low, broad forehead." Jack is engaged, after queries have been made and more or less satisfactory replies have been received in regard to his past, and goes to the Sutherland home at Windsor where he proceeds to pound the spinet into bits, to rag the servants, to express his frank opinions of Adrian's

vile painting, and finally after he has alienated most of the household, to precipitate a situation of ejection by bringing a drunken soldier to the house to play the clarinet. On the way to London he bursts into a first class compartment, occupied by an old man, who has bribed the guard to be allowed to travel alone, and his daughter, Magdalen, who is being taken home a prisoner from the delights of life on the stage. A most outrageous squabble follows. Once in the London station the girl sees a chance to escape and presses Jack to accept a ring in return for cab fare. He empties his pockets into her hands, with a gesture of gallantry, gold, silver, copper, about four pounds altogether, and refuses the ring, but she sends a porter after him with it. Later Jack gives Magdalen lessons in speaking, teaches her how to use her voice, and she becomes a successful actress, a state of affairs which her family accepts with resignation. Jack also enters into an engagement to teach singing to a class of young ladies, who arouse his deepest ire. Genius in its old age is sometimes able to give instruction without losing its temper; never in youth. As a matter of fact great interpretative artists, great composers, are never the best teachers. Jack as a teacher is impossible. On one occasion he inter-

rupts a lesson to leave the room in a rage; asked when he will return he snaps, "Never!" But he comes back for the next lesson as if nothing had happened, and indeed, so far as he was concerned, nothing had. His landlady gives a further illuminating description of Jack as a teacher:

"'I got him a stationer's daughter from High Street to teach. After six lessons, if you'll believe it, Miss, and she as pleased as anything with the way she was getting along, he told the stationer that it was waste of money to have the girl taught, because she had no qualification but vanity. So he lost her; and now she has lessons at four guineas a dozen from a lady that gets all the credit for what he taught her. Then Simpson's brother-in-law got him a place in a chapel in the Edgeware Road to play the harmonium and train the choir. But they couldn't stand him. He treated them as if they were dogs; and the three richest old ladies in the congregation, who had led the singing for forty-five years, walked out the second night, and said they wouldn't enter the chapel till he was gone. When the minister rebuked him, he up and said that if he was a God and they sang to him like that, he'd scatter 'em with lightning!'"

In a sudden outburst Jack explains himself to

a lady who has been instrumental in getting him pupils: "'Here am I, a master of my profession — no easy one to master — rotting, and likely to continue rotting unheard in the midst of a pack of shallow panders, who make a hotch-potch of what they can steal from better men, and share the spoil with the corrupt performers who thrust it upon the public for them. Either this, or the accursed drudgery of teaching, or grinding an organ at the pleasure of some canting villain of a parson, or death by starvation, is the lot of a musician in this country. I have, in spite of this, never composed one page of music bad enough for publication or performance. I have drudged with pupils when I could get them, starved in a garret when I could not; endured to have my works returned to me unopened or declared inexecutable by shop-keepers and lazy conductors; written new ones without any hope of getting even a hearing for them; dragged myself by excess of this fruitless labour out of horrible fits of despair that come out of my own nature; and throughout it all have neither complained nor prostituted myself to write shopware. I have listened to complacent assurances that publishers and concert-givers are only too anxious to get good original work — that it is their own interest to do so. As

if the dogs would know original work if they saw it: or rather as if they would not instinctively turn away from anything good and genuine! All this I have borne without suffering from it — without the humiliation of finding it able to give me one moment of disappointment or resentment; and now you tell me that I have no patience, because I have no disposition to humour the caprices of idle young ladies.' "

This is most excellent stuff and there is more of it. Of Jack as a composer we have several glimpses, but from the scene in which he pays the drunken clarinettist to play a part in his *Fantasia* so that he may know how it will sound, it is foreordained that he will become a great figure. I must omit the very amusing preliminary negotiations, the prolonged exchange of notes, which prelude the performance of Jack's *Fantasia* by the Antient Orpheus Society. But an incident of the rehearsal is too good to leave unquoted, especially as it will remind readers of a similar incident in the life of Hugo Wolf, used by Romain Rolland in his novel, " Jean-Christophe." But Shaw imagined the scene before it happened to Wolf! To be sure with a happier ending. The Antient Orpheus Society is any Philharmonic Society, conductor, board of directors and all, to the life. I

suppose they are like that in Abyssinia if they are so unfortunate as to have philharmonic orchestras there. The plot of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* is enacted season after season at the meetings of the doddering old fools who controll the destinies of the society. The fussy old idiots take creaking cautious steps towards the future. These are fully described . . . and finally the rehearsal in the great Chapter IX:

"Jack had rapped the desk sharply with his stick, and was looking balefully at the men, who did not seem in any hurry to attend to him. He put down the stick; stepped from the desk; and stooped to the conductor's ear.

"'I mentioned,' he said, 'that some of the parts ought to be given to the men to study before rehearsal. Has that been done?'

"Manlius smiled. 'My dear sir,' he said, 'I need hardly tell you that players of such standing as the members of the Antient Orpheus orchestra do not care to have suggestions of that kind offered to them. You have no cause to be uneasy. They can play anything — absolutely anything, at sight.'

"Jack looked black, and returned to his desk without a word. He gave one more rap with his stick, and began. The players were attentive, but

many of them tried not to look so. For a few bars, Jack conducted under some restraint, apparently striving to repress a tendency to extravagant gesticulation. Then, as certain combinations and progressions sounded strange and farfetched, slight bursts of laughter were heard. Suddenly the first clarinettist, with an exclamation of impatience, put down his instrument.

"'Well?' shouted Jack. The music ceased.

"'I can't play that,' said the clarinettist shortly.

"'Can *you* play it?' said Jack, with suppressed rage, to the second clarinettist.

"'No,' said he. 'Nobody could play it.'

"'That passage *has* been played; and it must be played. It has been played by a common soldier.'

"'If a common soldier ever attempted it, much less played it,' said the first clarinettist, with some contemptuous indignation at what he considered an evident falsehood, 'he must have been drunk.' There was a general titter at this.

"Jack visibly wrestled with himself for a moment. Then, with a gleam of humour like a flash of sunshine through a black thundercloud, he said: 'You are right. He *was* drunk.' The whole band roared with laughter.

"'Well, *I* am not drunk,' said the clarinettist, folding his arms.

"'But will you not just try wh——' Here Jack, choked by the effort to be persuasive and polite, burst out raging: 'It can be done. It shall be done. It must be done. You are the best clarinet player in England. I know what you can do.' And Jack shook his fists wildly at the man as if he were accusing him of some infamous crime. But the compliment was loudly applauded, and the man reddened, not altogether displeased. A cornist who sat near him said soothingly in an Irish accent, 'Aye do, Joe. Try it.'

"'You will: you can,' shouted Jack reassuringly, recovering his self-command. 'Back to the double bar. Now!' The music recommenced, and the clarinettist, overborne, took up his instrument, and when the passage was reached, played it easily, greatly to his own astonishment. The brilliancy of the effect, too, raised him for a time into a prominence which rivalled that of the pianist. The orchestra interrupted the movement to applaud it; and Jack joined in with high good humour.

"'If you are uneasy about it,' he said, with an

undisguised chuckle, 'I can hand it over to the violins.'

"'Oh, no, thank you,' said the clarinettist. 'Now I've got it, I'll keep it.'"

There are many, many more delightful pages in this very delightful book. We see Jack, at the request of a young lady that he play Thalberg's *Moses in Egypt*, satisfying her with improvised variations of his own on themes from Rossini's opera; on another occasion he improvises on themes from the second symphony of an old second-rate English composer, one of the patrons of the Antient Orpheus Society. Finally we see him the completely arrived master with his music for Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound": "four scenes with chorus; a dialogue of Prometheus with the earth; an antiphony of the earth and moon; an overture; and a race of the hours."

IV

Maurice Guest

HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON'S "Maurice Guest" was issued by Heinemann in London in 1908. Sometime later an American edition appeared. Otto Neustätter's German translation was published in Berlin by G. Fischer in 1912. The book seems to exist in the New York Public Library only in its German form. A search through the English "Who's Who?" and kindred manuals of biography revealed no information about the author. Lately I have learned that Henry Handel Richardson is a pseudonym, assumed with much mystery by a Australian lady, herself a musician and at one time a music student at Leipzig. She has already published a second novel and a third is on the press, I believe.

Mr. Richardson (for convenience I retain the author's symbol) has dealt with what is generally ignored in imaginative works about musicians, the study years. "Maurice Guest" is a novel of music student life in Leipzig. With unfaltering authority and a skilful pen he has drawn such a hectic picture of this existence (from my knowl-

edge of a similar life in Paris I should say that it is not overdrawn) as should frighten any American mother to the point of preventing her offspring from embarking on a musical career which shall require any such preparation. Indeed if mere students in Germany indulge in such riots of emotion what can be expected of *virtuosi* I should like to know!

The character of the title is an English boy, no colossal exception, no abnormality . . . rather the average boy who takes up music for a vocation without having much reason for doing so. His somewhat negative, romantic, sentimental, but very serious temperament quickly involves him in the maelstrom of student sex life, in which, for him, there is no escape. He fails in his piano studies while others, more brilliantly equipped for the career of an artist, quickly speed to their goals, at the same time living disordered and drunken existences. It is the tragedy of the real artist and the man who thinks he is one written in terms of the student. Tchekov in one of his greatest plays, *The Seagull*, compares the two types, as Trigorin and Treplieff, on another plane, of course. Frank Wedekind, too, in *Musik*, has dealt with the subject. Of the thousands of music students in Germany only a comparatively few

develop into artists, while of those who master the art, still fewer are capable of profiting financially by it. The central character of *Musik*, Klara Huhnerwadel, is a neurotic girl, insanely in love with her singing teacher. The play has a tragic and, according to Wedekind's wont, a bitterly ironic ending. In Mr. Richardson's book, Maurice, who is not unlike Octavius in *Man and Superman*, indeed not unlike Hamlet, is contrasted with a brilliant and unscrupulous Polish violinist, Schilsky, successful in love, successful as a *virtuoso*, successful as a composer. He not only plays the violin like a master, but we are told he plays a dozen other instruments better than well; we are given a description of his piano playing. Like Richard Strauss he has written a tone-poem suggested by Nietzsche's "Zarathustra." He is an excellent *chef d'orchestre*. His amatory adventures are conducted with an unscrupulous eye on the pocket books of his conquests. He lives on women, especially one woman, who, however, cannot hold his attention, even by paying freely. Despised by the town, there is scarcely a woman who is not in love with him, scarcely a man who is not his friend. All admire his genius. Here is a picture of the man, which you might place next to the conventional description of the musi-

cian composing in a garden, surrounded by nightingales and gardenias, dreaming of angels. Regard this Saint Cecil:

"In the middle of the room, at the corner of a bare deal table that was piled with loose music and manuscript, Schilsky sat improving and correcting the tails and bodies of hastily made notes. He was still in his nightshirt, over which he had thrown coat and trousers; and, wide open at the neck, it exposed to the waist a skin of the dead whiteness peculiar to red-haired people. His face, on the other hand, was sallow and unfresh; and the reddish rims of the eyes, and the coarsely self-indulgent mouth, contrasted strikingly with the general youthfulness of his appearance. He had the true musician's head: round as a cannon-ball, with a vast, bumpy forehead, on which the soft fluffy hair began far back, and stood out like a nimbus. His eyes were either desperately dreamy or desperately sharp, never normally attentive or at rest; his blunted nose and chin were so short as to make the face look top-heavy. A carefully tended young moustache stood straight out along his cheeks. He had large slender hands and quick movements.

"The air of the room was like a thin grey veiling, for all three puffed hard at cigarettes.

Without removing his from between his teeth, Schilsky related an adventure of the night before. He spoke in jerks, with a strong lisp, and was more intent on what he was doing than on what he was saying.

"'Do you think he'd budge?' he asked in a quick sputtery way. 'Not he. Till nearly two. And then I couldn't get him along. He thought it wasn't eleven, and wanted to stop at every corner. To irritate an imaginary bobby. He disputed with them too. Heavens, what sport it was! At last I dragged him up here and got him on the sofa. Off he rolls again. So I let him lie. He didn't disturb me.'

"Heinrich Krafft, the hero of the episode, lay on the short, uncomfortable sofa, with the table-cover for a blanket. In answer to Schilsky, he said faintly, without opening his eyes: 'Nothing would. You are an ox. When I wake this morning with a mouth like gum arabic, he sits there as if he had not stirred all night. Then to bed, and snores till midday, through all the hellish light and noise.'

"Here Fürst could not resist making a little joke. He announced himself by a chuckle — like the click of a clock about to strike.

"'He's got to make the most of his liberty.

He doesn't often get off duty. We know, we know.' He laughed tonelessly and winked at Krafft.

"Krafft quoted:

"'In der Woche zwier.'

"'Now you fellows, shut up!' said Schilsky. It was plain that banter of this kind was not disagreeable to him; at the same time he was just at the moment too engrossed, to have more than half an ear for what was said. With his short-sighted eyes close to the paper, he was listening with all his might to some harmonies that his fingers played on the table. When, a few minutes later, he rose and stretched the stiffness from his limbs, his face, having lost its expression of rapt concentration, seemed suddenly to have grown younger."

The conflict in this novel is expressed through Louise, one of those young women with a certain amount of money who find food for the gratification of their sex desires in the atmosphere of a music school town. She it is who, thrown aside by Schilsky, creeps back literally on her knees to beg him to renew their love; she it is who lavishes attention and money on his quite careless indifference; and she it is to whom Maurice Guest

devotes his love. Schilsky goes away without a word, and Louise, abandoned, in utter grief accepts the attentions of Maurice, at first without enthusiasm, later at least with gratitude, but when she has at length become his mistress the shadow of her past continually haunts Maurice; continually he drags it over their altar of love, polluting the oblations with his frantic suspicions. The psychology of these scenes, protracted to the wearying point, is so completely satisfying that they seem almost autobiographical. Here is a typical scene in which the comparison is laid bare:

"'Or tell me,' Maurice said abruptly with a ray of hope; 'tell me the truth about it all for once. Was it mere exaggeration, or was he really worth so much more than all the rest of us? Of course he could play — I know that — but so can many a fool. But all the other part of it — his incredible talent, or luck in everything he touched — was it just report, or was it really something else? — tell me.'

"'He was a genius,' she answered, very coldly and distinctly; and her voice warned him once more that he was trespassing on ground to which he had no right. But he was too excited to take the warning.

"'A genius!' he echoed. 'He was a genius! Yes, what did I tell you? Your very words imply a comparison as you say them. For I? — what am I? A miserable bungler, a wretched dilettant — or have you another word for it? Oh, never mind — don't be afraid to say it! — I'm not sensitive to-night. I can bear to hear your real opinion of me; for it could not possibly be lower than my own. Let us get at the truth at once, by all means! — But what I want to know,' he cried a moment later, 'is, why one should be given so much and the other so little. To one all the talents and all your love; and the other unhappy wretch remains an outsider his whole life long. When you speak in that tone about him, I could wish with all my heart that he had been no better than I am. It would give me pleasure to know that he, too, had only been a dabbling amateur — the victim of a pitiable wish to be what he hadn't the talent for.'"

At length Schilsky returns and Maurice becomes in truth Don José, to the Carmen (her favourite opera) of Louise. She frankly admits that the Pole is her only passion, and Maurice, who lacks the stamina of his Spanish prototype, brings the book to a satisfactory conclusion by killing himself. . . . There is a short final scene

in which we get a glimpse of Louise as Mme. Schilsky.

There is nothing jerky about the telling of this sordid story; nothing jars. It is done with a direction and a vivid attention to the matter in hand which is very arresting, and such atmospheric episodes as decorate its progress only aid in the elaborate development of the main theme. For example Schilsky is the recipient of homosexual affection from one Heinrich Krafft, who plays Chopin divinely and keeps a one-eyed cat named Wotan. This character is sharply etched with a few keen strokes. He in turn is under the subjugating amorousness of a masculine young lady named Avery Hill. There is an American girl, Ephie Cayhill, who pursues Schilsky and whom he seduces as he might munch a piece of cake, the while he is playing, composing, drinking, and continuing his affair with Louise. Her sister discovers her secret at a crucial moment, and she is carried away from Leipzig and drops out of the book, having served her purpose in denoting Schilsky's unlimited capacity.

The American colony is sketched, not at length, but the details catch the eye like the corners of a battle field in a Griffiths's picture. Mr. Richardson here, however, has almost verged on cari-

cature at times. We have all of us heard Americans who go abroad talk but this perhaps is a little strong: "I come to Schwartz (a piano teacher) last fall and he thinks no end of me. But the other week I was sick, and as I lay in bed, I sung some — just for fun. And my landlady — she's a regular singer herself — who was fixing up the room, she claps her hands together and says: 'My goodness me! Why *you* have a voice!' That's what put it in my head, and I went to Sperling to hear what he'd got to say. He was just tickled to death, I guess he was, and he's going to make something dandy of it, so I stop long enough. I don't know what my husband will say though. When I wrote him I was sick, he says: 'Come home and be sick at home' — that's what he says." And here's another American lady: "Now Mr. Dove is just a lovely gentleman, but he don't skate elegantly, an' he nearly tumbled me twice. Yes, indeed. But I presume when Miss Wade says come, then you're most obliged to go." But there isn't much of this sort of thing. The piano teachers of the colony, with their small petty jealousies, their sordid family lives, are painted. Pension life is depicted on the canvas, and the average family of Leipzig that takes in music students to board

and room. A typical figure is Frau Fürst, the widow of an oboe player in the Gewandhaus orchestra who died of a chill after a performance of *Die Meistersinger*. In her youth she had a good soprano voice and Robert Schumann often sent for her to come to his house in the Inselstrasse to try his songs, while Clara Schumann accompanied her. During her husband's lifetime she had become accustomed to remaining in the kitchen during musical evenings at the house, and she continues to do so when her son, who is a pianist and teacher, has friends in. On the same fourth floor with the Fürsts "lived a pale, harassed teacher, with a family which had long outgrown its accommodations; for the wife was perpetually in childbed, and cots and cradles were the chief furniture of the house. As the critical moments of her career drew nigh, the 'Frau Lehrer' complained, with an aggravated bitterness, of the unceasing music that went on behind the thin partition; and this grievance, together with the racy items of gossip left behind the midwife's annual visit, like a trail of smoke, provided her and Fürst's mother with infinite food for talk. They were thick friends again a few minutes after a scene so lively that blows seemed imminent, and they met every morning on the landing, where,

with broom or child in hand, they stood gossiping by the hour."

There are several descriptions of the students in the cafés, students with their blasphemous, obscene gossip, mingled with technical small talk. All through the book we are reminded why these young people are foregathered in these strange relations. That there are men and women of small talent who escape the weakening influences of such a circle I am too ready to admit, but Mr. Richardson has not gone to extremes. The life of vocal students in Paris is similar.

April 4, 1917.

Why Music is Unpopular

"I write what I see, what I feel, and what I have experienced, and I write it as well as I can; that is all."

Joris K. Huysmans.

Why Music is Unpopular

MUSICAL criticism usually falls automatically into two classes. In the one the critic, whose emotions have ostensibly been aroused by poems in tone, tries to render to the reader the intensity of his feelings by quoting from the word poets. The first line of "Endymion" and passages from Shakespeare fall athwart his pages. Scarcely a musical note but has its literary echo. If you have never heard Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* it may afford you some small consolation to find it tied up in the critic's mind with something like this:

> "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
> Bird thou never wert. . . ."

The music of Maurice Ravel reminds these unimaginative scribes of lines from Arthur Rimbaud and Jules Laforgue; snitches and snatches from Keats and Wordsworth serve admirably to evoke the spirit of almost any musician; I have found Walt Whitman linked with Edward MacDowell; Milton and Handel are occasionally made to seem to speak the same language; Byron and Tschai-

kowsky are asked to walk hand in hand. An audience of silly maiden ladies in the middle West, unaccomplished in the skill of tones, hearing little music, applauds delightedly this soft sobbery. . . . Two lines I have never seen quoted. This from W. B. Yeats ("King and No King") would certainly suit many a singer: "Would it were anything but merely voice!" and sometimes, after a few days of shameless concert-going with a friend from out of town, I feel like reassuring him, Calibanwise: "Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises."

Our second critic approaches his task with more sobriety of expression. He feels that it is his bounden, and unenlivening, duty to avoid florid language in his dismal effort to impress his readers with the sublime seriousness of the art he is so laboriously striving to keep within academically prescribed limits. His erudite style bristles with adverbial clauses and semi-technical conjurations, abjurations, and apostrophes. He summons the eleven dull devils of dusty knowledge to his aid in his consistent endeavour to be accurate and just. He never deals in metaphor, never in simile; no figures of speech sully the dead drab of his pages; he would consider them, if he thought about the matter at all, cheapening influences,

encroaching on the drowsy preserves of his somnolent profession. With as pedantic a gesture as he can command he lays out his weights and measures, always qualifying, always. Buts, ifs, and in spite ofs cumber his operose paragraphs. No music is perfect, none is imperfect. With this axiom, liberally disregarded by more lively writers, for a text, he proceeds to tell us that the *allegro* of the new *fantasia* is admirable in form, but that the themes, *perhaps*, do not justify such elaborate treatment. He emphasizes history; he leans on handbooks; musty facts are dragged in palestrically for their own sake alone. His manner is formidable, exegetical, eupeptic, adynamic . . . asthenic. He clings to *cliché*, "The composition smells of the midnight oil," etc., etc.

These two unideal, imaginary critics are only too actually with us on every hand. They always have been and they always will be. They are one of the principal reasons for the profound and unfortunate indifference, nay contempt, with which music (as an art, in so many words) is regarded by the man who may take an enormous amount of pleasure in reading books and looking at pictures. Instead of realizing the unconfined and boundless nature of the greatest and most mysterious of the arts, they have acted as direct

agents in the perpetuation of the bugaboos and voodoos of the academy, freely offering incense and the freshly slain sacrifices of baby musicians to the false gods of their fathers. Often, indeed, their work is feticidal. Far from urging the layman to approach the sacred temple, they frighten him away. "Come and listen" is never on their lips, never flows from their pens. Instead they write: "Stay away. I have spent my whole life trying to learn what you never can know. Any pleasure you may take in music is a false pleasure because it is not based on knowledge, which does not permit you to enjoy yourself. Retreat, young man; go back to your books and pictures; the gods of music want none such as you to draw near to the altars." Instead, indeed, of sending the reader to the nearest concert hall they have made him take a mental oath that never, if he knows it, will he voluntarily set foot in such a place. I am pre-supposing readers! The terrible truth is that these men, after a time, are not even read, and their early readers, skeptical thereafter of all literature devoted to music, never again will peruse a line of what they are forced to consider hopeless drivel. Thereby they shut themselves off, unwittingly, not only from further communion with music itself but also from in-

timacy with one of the most delightful sidetracks of all literature, for it cannot be denied that there are books on the subject which would amuse a tone-deaf autodidact.

For there are other kinds of music critics. There is the man, for instance, who writes with a flourish, indulges in "fine writing" and what is "precious," and vocalizes with adjectives. You may not agree with his hyperbolic statement that Grieg and MacDowell were the great musicians of the Nineteenth Century but you are interested in it because he means it and because he is not afraid to say so emphatically. "Perhaps," you sometimes whisper to yourself chasteningly, "he is right. Perhaps Brahms and Strauss are little men compared with these singers. How can one be sure? Was Mendelssohn greater than Beethoven?"

A second critic slashes violently into some school or other; he drives his sword into the heart of your pet theory, while valiantly defending as good a one of his own; he dips his pen in gall and writes on paper soaked in wormwood. He despises the new music, any *new* music, and he consumes nine thousand words in telling you why; he loathes the opera and he throws all the weight of his influential opinion against it. This man

is readable and interesting. His views assume importance even to those who do not agree with them, because they arouse curiosity. "Can the music of Schoenberg be as bad as all that?" You question yourself. "I must hear it and judge for myself."

A third imaginary musical writer mingles anecdote with more pregnant matter; nothing is too trivial for his purpose, nothing too serious. He is accurate without being pedantic; he paints the human side of the art. He draws us nearer to compositions by talking about the composers. When he writes of a singer it is not as if he were describing a vocal machine emitting nearly perfect notes; he pictures a human being applying herself to her art; his account is vivid, often humorous. He enlivens us and he awakens our interest. This is not altogether a matter of style: it is a matter of feeling. The style is perhaps the man!

There are but two rules for the critic to follow: have something to say and say it as well as you know how; say it with charm or say it with force but say it naturally; do not be afraid to say to-day what you may regret to-morrow; and, above all, do not befuddle and befog the mind of your reader by dragging in Shelley, Francis

Thompson, William Blake, and Verlaine. If you can suggest ideas to him by quoting from the poets, by all means quote freely, but do not try to kindle in him the sensation caused by a hearing of César Frank's *D Minor Symphony* by printing copious excerpts from the published works of Swinburne and Mallarmé. Musical criticism has two purposes, beyond the obvious and most essential one that it provides a bad livelihood for the critic: one, and perhaps the most important, is to entertain the reader, because criticism, like any other form of literature, should stand by itself and not lean too heavily on the matter of which it treats; the other is to interest the reader in music, or in books about music, or in musicians. Criticism can be informing without being pedantic; it can prod the pachydermal hide of a conservative old fogy concert-goer without deviating from the facts. Above all else criticism should be an expression of personal feeling. Otherwise it has no value. "Whoever has been through the experience of discussing criticism with a thorough, perfect, and entire Ass," writes Bernard Shaw, "has been told that criticism should above all things be free from personal feeling."

On one occasion I experienced an irrepressible desire to rail against the intellectual snobbery

which persuaded flaccid minds that the string quartet was the noblest form of art and that the organizations which devoted themselves to this fetich were archangelic interpreters of a heavenly song. I might have said: "The string quartet is an over-rated form of art. Certainly Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms have poured some of their greatest inspiration into this mould, some of their most musical feeling, and yet the nature of this music is such that its interpreters derive more pleasure from its performance than its auditors." It is possible that these sentences might have been read, if so, understood . . . and forgotten. If every time I expressed a personal feeling (and all my feelings and tastes are intensely personal) I followed with something like this, "it seems to me," or "this may or may not be true," or "according to my taste," or "Mr. Thing does not agree with me," my utterances would lose whatever force or charm they possess and they would be so clogged with extraneous qualifications that no one would read them. "It is the fault of our rhetoric," Emerson once wrote, "that we cannot strongly state one fact without seeming to belie some other.". . . What I did say about string quartets provoked attention. Philip Hale remarked that the older lions roared and shook

their manes because I spoke disrespectfully of chamber music, which thus suffered along with the equator. Perhaps. . . . However, a certain salutory disrespect for the snobbery of string quartet fanatics survived . . . also along with the equator.

It is not necessary that you, graceful reader, should agree with the critic. You will satisfy no longing in the heart of the animal if you do agree with him, unless he be made of false metal. It will require only a little reading on your part to convince you that the critics themselves, especially the best and most interesting critics, do not agree. There are no standards, it would seem, by which music can be assessed and judged with any degree of finality. Lawrence Gilman, in an article entitled "Taste in Music," which appeared in the "Musical Quarterly" for January, 1917, gives us plenty of evidence on this point, if any were needed. He reminds us that John F. Runciman viewed *Parsifal* with a contemptuous eye, called the music "decrepit stuff," "the last sad quaverings of a beloved friend" while Ernest Newman describes it as "in many ways the most wonderful and impressive thing ever done in music." Vernon Blackburn regarded Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* as the finest musical work

since Wagner but Mr. George Moore dismisses it briefly as "holy water in a German beer-barrel." H. E. Krehbiel considers *Pelléas et Mélisande* as a score of which "nine-tenths is dreary monotony" whereas Louis Laloy is stirred to reverence by contemplation of its beauty. Jean Marnold and H. T. Finck do not agree about *Carmen* and W. J. Henderson and James Huneker hold precisely opposite opinions regarding the merits of Strauss's *Don Quixote.*

To be sure there is pretty general acknowledgment that Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart were great composers. But some critics insist that the musicians who imitate the forms and styles of those masters to-day are great composers, a point of view which always awakens the murderous instinct within me, as it should be apparent to the veriest dolt that an artist in some way must reflect the spirit of his own epoch. There are critics who accept Wagner, *Rienzi, Lohengrin, Ring,* and *Parsifal;* others find nothing to enjoy or praise in certain of his works and even discover tiresome passages in *Die Walküre.* Some critics profess to admire folk-songs and folk-song influences; others do not. Many otherwise estimable men have been found who are willing to subscribe to an everlasting veneration for the

music of Liszt, a reverence for the compositions of Rubinstein. I have read in several newspapers and at least one magazine that Horatio Parker's *Mona* was a valuable contribution to national art. It is possible. When we are told that Percy Grainger is a greater composer than Debussy we may be interested if we are interested in the manner of the telling, but we are not obliged to accept the statement as literally true. Indeed it is so certain that there is so little that can be regarded as eternally true on the subject of music that the matter seems scarcely worth arguing about.

There are many delightful writers about music and you will find that all of them, in one way or another, bear out the point of my remarks. There are too many others who are hedging the most universal of the arts away from the people to whom it belongs, protecting it with their dull vapourings, their vapid technicalities, their worship of Clio, their stringent analyses, or, worse than all, their extensive explanations. Let each judge for himself, and let every one be encouraged to judge. Let more think about music; to make that possible curiosity must be stimulated, so that there may be a more general desire to *hear* music. Books are on every hand; if one does not visit galleries at least one cannot escape re-

productions of good pictures in the magazines and the Sunday supplements of the newspapers; but to hear music (I speak of so-called "art music") it is necessary to visit certain halls on certain days. This requires encouragement because it also requires patience. Why I have waited more than twelve years to hear Vincent d'Indy's *Istar* only to discover that I have heard it too late! The conductors of our concerts make matters difficult; do not let our critics make them more so.

In the interests of strict accuracy this article, of course, should have been entitled "Some remarks on one of the reasons for the comparative unpopularity of music as an art form," an exact description of its contents, but if I had called it that do you think you would have read it?

March 1, 1917.

THE END



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"The author relates that Strawinsky once played some measures of 'The Firebird' to his master, Rimsky-Korsakow, until the latter said, 'Stop playing that horrid thing; otherwise I might begin to enjoy it.' I stopped reading this book for much the same reason. It contains an infinite amount of amusing musical gossip, and deals, among other things, with Leo Ornstein and music in Spain."—"The Masses."

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